

"COME, MAT, JUMP IN!"

[Fontispiece]

# ON A ~~CORAL~~ REEF

THE STORY OF

## *A Runaway Trip*



BY

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LONDON:

CASELL, PETTER, AND GALPIN;

AND 596, BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

OUR KIND NURSE NATURE PLEASANT DREAMS BESTOWS  
ON SUCH AS BY HARD LABOUR EARN REPOSE ;  
AND WHILE THEIR BODIES IN SWEET SLEEP ARE SEAL'D,  
BIDS THEIR BLITHE SPIRITS WANDER FAR AFIELD.  
THE SAILOR-BOY, WHO SLUMBERS ON THE DECK,  
DREAMS NOT OF DROWNING MEN OR FOUND'RING WRECK ;  
THE SCORCHING SUN, THAT BEATS UPON HIS FACE,  
RECALLS THE COSY COTTAGE FIRE-PLACE ;  
THE WAVES TRANSPORT HIM TO HIS NATIVE SHORE,  
AND SEEM THE BROOK BEFORE THE COTTAGE DOOR ;  
THE BREEZE, THAT FANS HIS FOREHEAD, DOETH APPPEAR  
HIS MOTHER'S VOICE, SOFT WHISP'RING IN HIS EAR.

*Forecastle Fancies.*

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“ IF FIRE BREAK OUT, AND CATCH IN THORNS, SO THAT THE  
STACKS OF CORN, OR THE STANDING CORN, OR THE  
FIELD, BE CONSUMED THEREWITH ; HE THAT KINDLED  
THE FIRE SHALL SURELY MAKE RESTITUTION.”

*Exodus* xxii. 6.

## P R E F A C E.

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THIS story is intended for boys and girls, and boys and girls instinctively avoid prefaces. They prefer to plunge at once into the tale, caring nothing for the Author's apologies and excuses. Grown-up readers, however, are somewhat more tolerant, and as some of them also may chance to see this little book, perhaps they will kindly permit me to offer a few words of explanation.

In the first place, although I have made several lengthened voyages to various parts of the world, and have also signed articles to serve on board ship, I do not profess to be a sailor. I might pass myself off as such before landsmen, whose maritime experiences are confined to the Straits of Dover, but a genuine "salt" would soon find me out. Should a true seaman, therefore, cast his eye over these pages, I beg him to

excuse any technical errors into which I may have fallen.

In the second place, young people are always anxious to know whether a story is true, or only "made up." I can assure them that the main incidents of this narrative are quite true, as they occurred during the wreck of the *Cabalva*, East Indiaman, which was lost, as I have described, on the Cargados Carajos Reef about half a century ago.

ARTHUR LOCKER

# ON A CORAL REEF:

*The Story of a Runaway Trip to Sea.*



## CHAPTER I.

### A NAUTICAL VISITOR AT SNAPE FARM.

"I CAN'T recollect a finer hay harvest than this, and if you search the country for ten miles round you won't see six bonnier ricks than those are, Jenny. Sir Henry himself, with all his model farming, and deep draining, and patent manures, can show nothing better."

"Indeed, my love, we ought to be truly thankful, and I try to be so, but it's hard to be as grateful as one ought. After last year's losses a bad hay crop would have ruined us. But John, dear," continued the wife, as she laid her hand on

her husband's shoulder, "don't ye think we should insure?"

"I've never insured yet. Why should I pay over my hard-earned money to a parcel of agents and secretaries for nothing?"

"For nothing! It isn't for nothing. Think of the risks we run this hot weather; think of all the haymakers and travellers that are wandering about at this time of the year. Everything is as dry as tinder, and if a man were to lie down under one of your ricks, and strike a light for his pipe—"

"I know what might happen only too well," interrupted her husband, impatiently.

"Remember, last week there was a stackyard fire at Finkley. I do wish, John—"

"There, there, don't bother any more about it. Let a man alone to enjoy his pipe after a hard day's work."

"But will you insure the ricks, John?"

"Yes, I will, Jenny."

"To-morrow?"

"No, I can't manage it to-morrow. There's too much work to be done on the farm."

"Delays are dangerous, John."

"What a worrying woman you are to-night! I'll do it on market-day, that's Saturday, when I go into Croxhaven. Will that please you? Hollo! here comes Willie Pershore next, wanting something or other. I can't get a moment's peace among ye all."

Let us take the opportunity presented by Willie Pershore's interruption to say a few words about Snape Farm and its inhabitants. Snape Farm was of considerable extent, comprising several hundred acres of land; but much of this land was either rocky or boggy, and the best of it would have been none the worse for some



of the deep draining of which John Baylis spoke so contemptuously. The farm was his own property, and had been in the possession of the Baylises time out of mind. John Baylis was an active, hard-working farmer of the old school; up in the morning as soon as his labourers, not afraid to put his hand to any sort of work, however dirty and troublesome the work might be, but prejudiced and old-fashioned in his notions, and especially jealous of Sir Henry Tothill, the squire, because Sir Henry was a pushing, money-making personage, who was, bit by bit, buying up all the surrounding small farms and adding them to his own property. John Baylis was already in debt and difficulty, for the year before he had sustained several serious losses; the blight had rotted his potatoes, the murrain had destroyed his sheep, and, but for the bountiful hay-harvest at the produce of which he now

sat gazing with such complacent eyes, he would probably have been compelled to accept the tempting offer made by Sir Henry's agent, and, abandoning the patrimony which he had inherited from his ancestors, would have sailed as an exile from old England to begin life again under some foreign sky. It was no wonder, then, that his wife was anxious to insure the safety of those precious hayricks on which so much depended.

John and Jane Baylis had a large family of sons and daughters, but as the farm was small, and as the children were of an energetic disposition, they had all gone out into the world to seek a livelihood by other occupations except the eldest son, John, who assisted his father on the farm, and the youngest son, Matthew, a smart, intelligent boy of thirteen. It is with Matthew's adventures that we shall have for the most part to deal in the course of this narrative,

and therefore we may style him the hero of our story.

Matthew might have been very happy at home, for his mother was a sensible, sweet-tempered woman; and his father, though rough, and gruff, and passionate at times, was really extremely fond of his youngest boy; but the lad could not feel very comfortable because of his brother John. John was a hard-working, pains-taking young man, but he was of a jealous and suspicious disposition; he wanted to have the farm all to himself, and he used to grumble because his father did not send Mat out to learn some trade, like his brothers. Then John had a young wife as jealous as himself, who was always fancying her own children were being neglected, and who was always ready to tell tales to the old people about Matthew's idleness and mischief.

We need not say in what county Snape

Farm was situated; it is enough to observe that the country thereabouts was distinguished rather for its picturesqueness than for its fertility. In some parts there were barren peat mosses, where not a tree or a shrub was visible; in other parts there were thick fir plantations, which seemed to Matthew as gloomy and as extensive as the North American forests about which he had read in an old-fashioned book called "Hearne's Travels;" on the horizon there were lofty blue hills, whose summits for several months in the year were patched with snow, while the top of any moderate-sized eminence commanded a view of the bright green sea, which was only some five or six miles distant. The buildings of Snape Farm lay in a snug hollow, sheltered from the furious southwestern blasts of the winter months by a curiously-shaped conical hill exactly resembling a sugarloaf, which rose to the

height of about two hundred feet, immediately behind the house, so that the greater part of the kitchen-garden lay on a steep slope. On the summit of this hill stood two ash trees, gnarled and stunted by the bleakness of their situation, but held in high respect by the Baylis family because they had been there for centuries, and were indeed reported to be the last remains of the great forest, which in the days of the Danish incursions covered all that region. The ingenuity of some of the younger Baylises had erected a sort of arbour between the trunks of these two aged relics of a bygone era, and in this arbour, which in the summer-time was mantled with sweet-scented creeping plants, the farmer was fond of smoking his evening pipe, and of surveying his broad acres, as they lay spread like a map beneath him.

Willie Pershore was the head labourer

on Snape Farm, a tall handsome man of sixty, lithe and active, as upright as a dart, a skilful fisherman in the lakes and streams with which the country abounded, and a noted champion in the wrestling ring. He and John Baylis had been boys together, and though one was master and the other was man, there was little or no deference in Pershore's manner towards him. Indeed, old Willie was not very deferential to any body, he never made obeisance to Sir Henry; and when Lady Tothill one day sought shelter in his cottage during a shower, he merely welcomed her with a "Sit doon, lass," just as if she had been the wife of the blacksmith or the wheelwright.

The steep ascent of Sugarloaf hill, which would have tried the breath even of a young man, if town-bred, had no effect on old Willie's practised breathing-pipes. He arrived in front of the harbour as fresh

as if he had been carried up in a sedan chair, and addressed his master thus—

“Ye’re wanted.”

“And who wants me?” answered Mr. Baylis, rather fretfully.

“I canna tell, because I didna ask. Ye can ask him yersell, when he gets here. He’s coming up alang wi’ young Mat.”

So saying, old Willie calmly helped himself to a pipeful of tobacco from his master’s pouch, which lay on the little arbour table, and then seating himself on a great sandstone rock that cropped out of the earth, made preparations for smoking.

Let us, meanwhile, take a glance a little lower down the hill. Matthew, a fresh-coloured boy, with a bright curly head of hair, tall of his age, clean-limbed, and deep-chested, was ascending with a carelessly elastic step. By his side toiled a short fat man of forty, who paused every minute or two to wipe his face and fetch his breath.

He had a ruddy, good-humoured face, and wore a black shiny hat, a black tail coat, a loosely-tied black neckerchief, a black satin waistcoat, and a pair of Russia duck white trousers.

“ I was born in the Essex marshes,” he observed, as he stopped to take breath, “ and therefore hills are not much in my line. But I’m very fond of a fine prospect.”

“ There’s a beautiful view from the top of our Sugarloaf, sir,” replied Matthew. “ Mountains, and rivers, and lakes ; and over yonder the sea.”

“ The sea, eh ! Can you look down into Croxhaven harbour ?”

“ No, sir. Bunt Hill lies between us and Croxhaven, and hides our view of the harbour.”

“ What a pity ! I could have shown you something worth seeing.”

“ What is that, sir ?”

“ A big vessel that’s lying there.”



"I suppose you mean Mr. Jefferson's new fishing-smack with three masts, sir? We heard she was to be launched this week, and she'll be the biggest ship ever built in Croxhaven."

The fat man laughed a merry laugh. "I wish," said he, "that this telescope," producing one, as he spoke, from his pocket, "had the power of making Bunt Hill transparent. Then I could show you something that would make Mr. Jefferson's three-masted smack—but, hollo! here we are at the top. This is something like a prospect! This beats the Essex marshes all to nothing!"

He took no notice of the harbour where Matthew's father and mother were sitting, nor of Willie Pershore, who sat on the big sandstone rock quietly smoking his pipe, but he instantly clapped the telescope to his eye, and swept the horizon in every direction, uttering various expressions of

delight, and winding up with, "No, you're right, my boy. Bunt hill isn't transparent, and so we can't see the jolly old *Cassiopeia*."

"He's daft, I'm thinking," muttered Willie, winking gravely at Mr. Baylis, and pointing his pipe-stem towards the little fat man.

The farmer made no reply, but coughed loudly, as if to attract the stranger's attention, upon which the little man started, took the telescope from his eye, pulled off his hat, made Mrs. Baylis a polite bow, and then said, as he turned to her husband, "Mr. Baylis, I believe?"

"That's my name, sir," answered the farmer, doggedly, as much as to say, "I should just like to hear you tell me it isn't."

"My business is very soon told," said the little man. "I belong to the *Cassiopeia*, a full-rigged ship of eleven hundred tons register." As he uttered these words

he glanced slyly at Matthew, as though to imply, "What of Mr. Jefferson's three-masted vessel now?" "A slight accident has caused her to put into Croxhaven; and now that she's here, it is thought advisable to increase her stock of provisions. Mr. Rigdon, the pilot—"

"Aye, I know him well," interrupted Mr. Baylis, with more civility in his tone than he had shown at first.

"Mr. Rigdon, the pilot, told me you had some prime young porkers—"

"They're rale gude fattening ones, and no mistake," exclaimed Willie Pershore, enthusiastically.

"I've seen 'em," said the little man. "This young gentleman here has introduced me to the pigsty. I've seen 'em; I like the looks of 'em, and I'm prepared to buy a dozen of 'em, and pay you the cash as soon as they're safe aboard the ship."

The conversation was becoming deci-

dedly interesting. Mr. Baylis rose from his seat, and grew quite animated. A long palaver followed. Everybody descended the hill, and went into the farmyard. The pigs were once more carefully inspected. Willie lifted them one by one out of their sty, and amid much squeaking, held them up admiringly in his arms, just as a nurse exhibits a fine baby. At last the bargain was struck, and the little fat man, having partaken of a bread and cheese supper, and a jug of home-brewed ale, set off to walk to Croxhaven by moonlight.

Neither Mr. Baylis, nor his wife, nor his eldest son, nor his daughter-in-law, nor young Matthew, had thought of asking the stranger his name, for they all took it for granted that he was the captain of the *Cassiopeia*. As he was leaving the house he quite won old Willie's heart by presenting him with a fig of real foreign tobacco,

and Willie accordingly offered to see him a mile or two on his way.

"She is a terrible big ship, I reckon, this *Catch-ye-up-here*," observed Willie. He could not pronounce the hard name properly.

"The *Cassiopeia*? Yes, she's a pretty tidy size. We had a job to get her into the harbour, and I expect we shall have a worse job still to get her out again."

"What might the owners give ye a month for being master of her?" asked old Willie, who was an inquisitive fellow.

"Me master of the *Cassiopeia*? Ha! ha! ha!" and the little man burst into a jolly laugh. "My friend, you pay me a compliment which I don't deserve, by mistaking me for the captain of such a noble vessel as she is. I can hardly call myself a seaman. The only department I command is the provision department. My name is Torkington, and I'm the chief steward."

"I like ye none the worse, lad, for saying plainly what ye are. I hate stuck-up folks. Good night. Ye can't mistake the way into Croxhaven, it's straight afore ye. My sakes! that's prime tobaccy," muttered old Willie, as he put a quid into his mouth.

"It ought to be. I brought it from Virginia. Good night, and thank ye."



## CHAPTER II.

## PISTOL PRACTICE, AND ITS RESULTS.

MRS. BAYLIS had her head so full of the fire insurance project, and felt so nervous, that before she went to bed she took a walk to the rickyard, just to see that everything was safe, and that no tramps, or gipsies, or such-like wanderers, had taken up their quarters there for the night. Even after she fell asleep her thoughts still continued to run on red-hot coals and lucifer matches, and she made her husband very angry (for he was tired out by a hard day's work), by starting up in bed and screaming "fire." He got out of bed and looked out of window. Everything was perfectly peaceful and still. Even\* that restless old quadruped, Towler, the watch-dog, had ceased to bay the moon, and was lying asleep in front of his kennel, dreaming, most likely,

of a paunch which he had seen hanging up in the back kitchen ; while the six hayricks, which shone so golden yellow in the bright sunshine, looked in the cold moonlight as if they were covered with snow. So, after grumbling at his wife, and calling her a silly doited body, the farmer got back into bed again, and slept till sunrise.

Nor did young Matthew sleep so soundly as usual, though his dreams were of a different cast. They were all about ships, and savages, and stormy seas ; and he woke up with a start just as a troop of South Sea islanders were dancing round a pig which they had roasted, the said pig's face bearing a marvellous resemblance to the features of the little fat man who had visited Snape farm on the preceding evening.

Soon after sunrise everybody was up and bustling about their work. Mrs. Baylis felt more easy in her mind than she had



been during the night, for nobody had set fire to the ricks, and the next day would be Saturday, when her husband had promised to go to the insurance office. At breakfast time the chief subject of conversation was Mr. Torkington's purchase. The pigs were wanted at once on board the *Cassiopeia*, and the question debated was "who should take them down to Croxhaven?" Mr. Baylis could not spare the time to go, neither could he spare John or Willie Pershore. He wanted all hands up at the Long Croft, to get the ground ready for sowing turnips, in case a shower should fall. Mrs. Baylis could not go, for this was ironing-day.

"Let me go, father," cried Matthew, with sparkling eyes.

Mr. Baylis had just been rapping his knuckles against the old-fashioned weather-glass that hung in the passage, in hopes of shaking the index from "very dry," at

which it obstinately stood, and felt annoyed because it did not stir a hair's breadth. He was on the point of uttering an angry "no," when his eldest son, John, put in a word.

"A pretty market you'd take the pigs to, Master Mat!" he said, with a sneer.

"He'd spend the steward's money, likely enough, on gingerbread and goodies," chimed in Mrs. John.

Mr. Baylis brought down his big fist on the table with a bang that made all the porridge bowls rattle, and the crockery ring on the shelves. Everybody started.

"Martha," he shouted; "I-don't like these sneering speeches. You're trying to make folks believe that my youngest boy is a thief. Did ever you know him steal anything?"

Mrs. John turned very red, and murmured that, "she couldn't say she had."

"Then keep your tongue between your teeth," continued Mr. Baylis, still in high

wrath. "You and John are for ever running Mat down. Now, just to show you that I'm master in this house, and not you, I'll send Mat over to Croxhaven with the pigs, and if he doesn't do the business rightly, he'll have to settle accounts with me. D'ye hear, lad?"

"Mat will do his best, won't ye, my dear?" said Mrs. Baylis, patting his head.

"I'll try to, mother," answered Mat, who had turned very red during this scene.

As soon as he had swallowed his last mouthful of porridge, John strolled away with a sulky air into the yard, and presently afterwards his wife followed him, under the pretence that she heard her baby crying.

"Now then, Jenny," said the farmer, addressing his wife, directly he and she and Mat were alone together, "was I right or wrong to speak as I did just now to Master John?"

"Right, my dear. John is apt to

presume too much because he is the eldest son."

"He'd better take care," cried Mr. Baylis, smiting the table again, "or when I'm dead and gone he'll find himself— And yet I won't say that, either," he continued, "for he's a good farmer, the only one of the family who— Now then, Mat," he exclaimed, suddenly turning on his youngest son, "what are you standing staring at me for? You've got a job to do. Go and do it. Take your pigs to Croxhaven, and bring me back the brass. D'ye hear?"

It was evident that the state of the barometer, or his disturbed sleep, or something or other had put Mr. Baylis into a bad humour that morning, so Matthew, without saying a word in reply, darted out of the room like a pellet from a pop-gun, and within half an hour's time might have been seen in the stable yard, assisting old Willie Pershore to put the grey pony into

the light cart. A few minutes later such piercing cries of terror and anguish were heard that you might have fancied a terrible massacre was being perpetrated, but in reality nothing very dreadful was taking place. Matthew was merely chasing the porkers, and, as he caught them, was handing them one by one to old Willie, who deposited them in the cart.

“Silly fellows!” cried Mat, “you little know the luck that’s in store for you, or you wouldn’t make all this hallaballoo. Instead of staying in this dull old pigsty you are going on a voyage of discovery half round the world.”

“I’d reether it was them than me,” observed old Willie. “Fresh water’s well enough for me, I’ve no stomach for salt. Here’s the reins, laddie. Be sure ye take her easy uphill, and don’t force her downhill, and mind she don’t cast this near hind-shoe. Ye’d best stop at Hobbie

Wilson's as ye pass, and get a nail or two put in it. And, Mat," concluded Willie, confidentially, as he polished the pony's flank with his coat-sleeve, "if the little fat chap aboard the *Catch-ye-up-here* should say a word about tobaccy, ye can mind him that Willie Pershore, who showed him down the Croxhaven loaning,\* is fond of a whiff; and if he says nowt about tobaccy, ye can just twist the talk round that way. And noo," added the old man, changing to a brisk, business-like tone, "be off wi' ye."

The twelve porkers, which during Willie's parting observations had settled down pretty amicably at the bottom of the cart, set up a piteous squeaking as soon as they found themselves being jolted over the rough road, and took up so much of Mat's attention that he scarcely noticed the clinking sound made by the loose shoe. When he got to Hobbie Wilson's he found that

\* North-country for "lane."

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the shoe had come off, so was obliged to stop there until another could be put on. While he was waiting in the smithy, and watching the red sparks flying up from the anvil, somebody touched his arm. He looked round, and saw a lad of about his own age and size, with a queer, saucy expression of face, dressed in a jacket and trousers all covered with patches, carrying in one hand a fishing-rod and in the other a string, to which half-a-dozen fine trout were fastened. This was Dicky Rigdon, only son of Widow Rigdon, who kept the little general shop in Finkley, and nephew of Mr. Benjamin Rigdon, the pilot. An idle young rascal was Dicky Rigdon, always getting into scrapes, and never sticking long to any steady work. His uncle had sent him for three months on trial on board of a coasting vessel, but though the captain had pronounced him to be smart and clever enough, he had soon tired of seafaring life ;



WAITING IN THE SMITHY.





he had then been put to learn farming with Mr. Baylis, but he had played such pranks while there, setting the cocks to fight, riding the cows about the fields, and plaguing old Willie, that Mr. Baylis would have nothing more to do with him, though, as he had a great respect for Dicky's uncle, he was sorry to send him away. After this Master Dick spent his time, for the most part, in snaring rabbits, in shooting small birds (he now and then popped a grouse into his bag when nobody was near at hand) and in fishing. Next to Willie Pershore, he was the most skilful fisherman in the countryside, and he got himself out of many a scrape by the presents of fish which he sent to the farmers' wives.

"Hallo, Mat," he said, as he familiarly squeezed young Baylis's arm; "I know where you're taking those pigs to."

"I don't think you do," replied Matthew, rather haughtily; for he was proud of the

commission with which his father had entrusted him, and had confided it to no one.

"What will you bet me, lad?"

"I won't bet."

"Will you give me a ride in the cart if I guess?"

"I don't mind giving you a ride," answered Matthew.

He had hardly spoken before Dicky vaulted nimbly into the cart, saying, "The porkers are for old Torkington, aboard of the *Cassiopeia*. You look, surprised, Mat, so I'll tell you how I know it. I met old Tork last night, trudging into Croxhaven, turned back, and walked a bit of the way with him. They wouldn't mind having a few more hands, he told me, aboard of the *Cassiopeia*, and he asked me if I should like to sail in her. I said that I'd had enough of the sea, and that I preferred liberty ashore. But if I was you, Mat, with

a Turk of a big brother always topping the officer over me, I should be inclined to take a sea voyage. Just pull up the pony, old fellow, for half a minute; I want some of that wet moss."

Matthew drew up the cart at a spot where a clear stream was trickling down from the hillside into a rude stone basin. Dicky divided his fish into two parcels, each of which he wrapped in a bundle of moss. He hid one parcel under a thorn-bush, the other he took in the cart with him.

"Those are for your mother, Mat," he said; "she likes a bit of fish for supper. We'll fetch them as we come back. The others I shall give to old Torkington."

The harbour of Croxhaven was not very big, and usually contained no vessels of a more imposing character than coasting brigs and fishing smacks. Compared with these diminutive craft, the *Cassiopeia* was like a whale among a shoal of porpoises. She

was too deeply laden to be moored at the quay side, so she lay out in the middle of the basin. In spite of his disinclination to stick to any regular work, Dick Rigdon was a handy fellow, and Matthew was very glad to have his assistance. Mr. Baylis's squeaking merchandise was speedily transferred to a boat, and rowed alongside of the *Cassiopeia*. Mr. Torkington carefully examined the porkers to see that none of them had received any injury during their travels by land or water, and having ascertained that they were all sound, wind and limb, he handed them over to the care of the ship's cook, and invited the two boys into the chief cabin. Here he entertained them with the remains of a meat pie and some bottled porter, thanked young Rigdon for his present of fish, which he said Captain Cruikshank would enjoy as a relish when he came aboard for tea; and finally paid Matthew the price which he had agreed on

with his father for the pigs. He then took the boys over the ship, and told them, in answer to their numerous questions, that she was bound for Calcutta with a general cargo, but that where she was going to after she left Calcutta was a profound secret, known only to the owners, and not even to Captain Cruikshank himself, who was forbidden to open the sealed letter containing his instructions until he was safely moored in the Hooghly. As they were leaving the ship, Mr. Torkington presented Dicky Rigdon with a fishing line, and gave Matthew another fig of tobacco for Willie Pershore, and a shilling for himself. The two lads went away delighted with their reception, but Matthew felt quite sorrowful to think that this was possibly his last sight of the *Cassiopeia*, for the friendly steward had told him that she was now perfectly ready for sea, and would very likely sail within a few

hours after Captain Cruikshank's arrival on board.

"How I should like to be going with her!" murmured Matthew, as he drove the pony cart through the narrow High street of Croxhaven, and turned his head to obtain the last glimpse of her towering masts.

"Well, you've only got to go on board, and offer yourself as a volunteer. I believe the chief officer would take you," answered Dicky, carelessly. "You can trust me to drive Rosey safe to Snape Farm, and I'll take care your father gets his pig-money."

"Don't talk nonsense, Dick. Do you think I'd skulk away like a thief, without asking my parents' leave? My father would never forgive me, and my mother would be heart-broken."

"Mine wouldn't," replied Dick, with a laugh.

Matthew made no reply, for he would not have cared to tell Dick his thoughts.

"I am not such a scapegrace, as you, Master Dick," he said to himself, "I have always been dutiful and industrious."

'Well,' observed Dicky, after a pause, "as we don't intend to sail aboard of the *Cassiopeia*, it's of no use talking any more about her." He put his hand into his pocket, and drew out the fishing line which Mr. Torkington had given him. "One mustn't look a gift horse in the mouth," he said; "but I'd sooner have had a shilling, like you, Matthew. What do you mean to do with your shilling?"

"It is my sister Annie's birthday next week, and I think I shall buy her a present with it." Matthew blushed as he spoke. It is astonishing how ashamed we often are of doing a good action.

Dick once more put his hand into his pocket, and produced a pistol. It was a small, old-fashioned, rusty weapon, but



Matthew Baylis was a boy, and his eyes sparkled at the sight.

"Where did you get that?" he cried.

"A present from Watty Nichols, the gunsmith in Finkley, in exchange for a sure killing salmon-fly I made for him. But the stingy loon wouldn't give me either powder or bullets, and I've no money to buy any."

"I'll buy you some, Dick," answered Matthew. "I owe you something for helping me with the pigs." So the greater part of Mr. Torkington's present was converted into powder and bullets.

Dick wanted to begin pistol practice as soon as they got clear of Croxhaven, but Matthew very properly refused to stop. "Let me get back home," he said, "and hand this money over to my father. After that you may shoot as much as you please."

Mr. Baylis, and John, and Willie Per-shore, were so busy up in the Long Croft

that they had not found time to come home to dinner, so Mrs. John had carried their dinner to them ; and as the afternoon was very warm, she had stayed with her baby and her needlework under the shade of a stone wall within view of the workers. Nobody was at home but Mrs. Baylis, busy with her ironing. She was pleased to perceive that Matthew had properly executed the commission which had been entrusted to him, but she was not so well pleased to see his companion, the idle Dicky Rigdon, though she could not help allowing that it was kind of him to remember her fondness for fish. X

“As soon as you’ve had something to eat, Mat,” said Mrs. Baylis, as she locked up the money in her husband’s strong box, “you’d better go and help your father in the Long Croft.” But after dinner Matthew felt very lazy, and, being secretly stimulated by his companion, he began to make

various excuses. The pony wanted rubbing down, the sun was very hot, he would go to work when it grew a little cooler. The end was that Mrs. Baylis returned to her ironing, and that Mat never went near the Long Croft, but remained with Dicky Rigdon, firing shots at a bottle which they had set on a gatepost. Before long they grew tired of this amusement, and lay down to sleep under the shadow of one of the hayricks. They slept longer than they intended, and when they awoke, the lengthening shadows showed that evening was close at hand.

"I say, Dicky," exclaimed Mat, as he glanced at the reddening sun, "we're too late for tea."

Dick made no answer. He was groping among the loose hay at the foot of the rick. "I can't find the pistol," he said presently, "and yet I could swear that I went to sleep with my hand on it—just here," pointing to

a particular spot. The two boys turned the hay over and over but could discover no trace of the pistol.

"You must have left it where we were shooting," said Matthew.

"I feel sure I didn't," answered Dick ;  
"but we will go there and look, if you like."

The gatepost at which they had been shooting was three fields distant from the stackyard, for the two lads, knowing that Mrs. Baylis did not exactly approve of their proceedings, had wished to get out of earshot. They searched, and searched, and were at last compelled to leave off looking by the increasing darkness.

"How late it is," exclaimed Matthew ;  
"it must be supper time." He hoped that Dick would say in reply, "Then I must run away home at once," for Finkley was three long miles distant. Mat had an uneasy feeling that his father would not be too well pleased to see Dick after the idle afternoon

they had spent together. But instead of showing any anxiety to get home to his widowed mother at Finkley, Master Dicky remarked, in his careless, saucy style :

“ Supper ! How glad I am to hear such a word, for I’m desperately hungry ; and after supper, if I can persuade old Willie to lend me a lantern, I must come and have another look for the pistol. Let’s go up to the house now, Mat.”

Mat, who was not gifted with Dicky Rigdon’s brass-like impudence, entered the stone kitchen, which was the living-room of the family, with fear and trembling. The supper-table was spread, everybody was seated, and Mr. Baylis was in the act of carving a mutton ham.

“ Well, Mat,” cried the farmer ; but in a much more good-natured tone than Mat had expected ; “ where ever have ye been hiding yourself ? ” Your mother told me that you’d brought the money home all

right and straight, and that Dick Rigdon had helped ye to take the pigs aboard. Sit down, Master Dick, sit down; don't be afeared. I shall always be glad to hear of your doing any honest work."

So Dick sat down, and presently all the company were too busily engaged in eating and drinking to find time for talking. Gentlefolks like to season their meals with conversation, but to people who work hard the time spent in eating is generally too precious to be frittered away in such a manner. "One thing at a time," farmer Baylis used to say; "when you work, work; when you eat, eat; and when you talk, talk." As soon, however, as he had finished his supper, he pushed back his chair, and bade Matthew fetch his tobacco-pouch from the pocket of his working coat, which hung in the passage.

"I wish, Jenny," observed the farmer, addressing his wife, while his youngest son

was absent from the room; "that I saw in Mat the makings of a farmer, the same as I see them in John. John lad," he continued, bestowing a hearty thump on his eldest son's back; "I was surly to ye at breakfast time, so it's all the more reason that I should testify to your mother that you're a real good working farmer; a true descendant of the old Baylis stock. See how your wife's colouring! She's pleased to hear me praise you. And don't fancy that I'm blind to your good points, Martha, because I scolded you this morning. She isn't a bad sort of wife that'll cook a good dinner, and bring it out to the field, as you did."

"Aye, and it was a rare good dinner," chimed in old Willie. "If there's a thing I do love, it's raisin' pudding."

"And a pipe of true Virginia tobacco after it, Willie; eh, man?" answered the farmer, with a wink at his wife. "What a

time that boy is fetching the pouch ! Hand me your tobacco meanwhile, Willie, ye sly owd villain. Talking of Mat, I'm afraid his heart isn't in the farm work. How was it he didn't come up to the Long Croft this afternoon, Jenny ?”

“ He was tired, my dear, after the drive to Croxhaven, and the sun was very hot,” observed Mrs. Baylis, who always strove to put everybody's conduct in the best possible light.

Matthew, who had at length found his father's tobacco-pouch, reached the door just as these words were being spoken. Curiosity to hear more prevented him from entering.

“ The sun was not so hot,” remarked Mrs. John, in her softest and most sneering tones, “ as to prevent him and Mr. Richard Rigdon from amusing themselves with pistol shooting for the greater part of the afternoon.”



“Ha! what’s that?” exclaimed the farmer, rising suddenly into wrath, and turning upon his youthful guest. “So that’s what you came here for, Master Dick, to make my son as idle as yourself. I don’t want Mat to become a crack marksman with the pistol; it leads to nothing but pigeon matches, and betting, and all manner of extravagance.”

“Indeed, sir,” cried Dick, who, if he chose, could assume a very persuasive and respectful tone; “indeed, sir, I had no such intention. It was only an old pistol that Watty Nichols—”

“Watty Nichols, indeed! Pretty company for my boy to keep: a drunken old vagabond, that spends half his time in fishing, and the other half in poaching.”

“He wasn’t with us at all, sir,” said Dick, “and we only fired the pistol about twenty times.”

“And that was twenty times too often,”

growled Mr. Baylis, in reply. "Is this the weather to be firing pistols about people's fields, when every blade of grass is withered and dry? How do you know but that some wad isn't now lying smouldering? Young master," he exclaimed, suddenly checking himself, "you've made me feel quite nervous. I shall begin to fancy"—

"At all events, John," said his wife with a smile, "you won't forget the insurance when you go to market to-morrow."

"Forget it! No, I should think not. You've dinned it into my ears too often, to let me forget it," replied the farmer, with a surly air.

"It's a great mercy," observed Mrs. John, casting up her eyes with a devotional expression, "that the ricks have not been burnt to-day. During this dry weather pistol-shooting seems scarcely a proper amusement in a stack-yard."

"Pistol-shooting in my stackyard!" roared Mr. Baylis, starting to his feet.

"We never did anything of the sort, sir," cried Dicky Rigdon, undauntedly.

"I can't bear to make mischief," said Mrs. John, with a virtuous air; "and therefore I determined to say nothing about this affair. But," continued she, "I must speak now." With these words, she put her hand into her dress pocket and drew out a small parcel, which she gave to her father-in-law, saying: "I found this underneath one of your hay-ricks as I came home from the Long Croft. I wrapped it up carefully in brown paper, for fear it should blow up in my pocket."

Mr. Baylis opened the parcel. It contained the missing pistol.

"I swear, sir, that we never fired a shot near your ricks," began Dicky.

But Mr. Baylis would not listen to a word of evidence. He had worked him-

self up into a towering passion, and his daughter-in-law, being a malicious woman, forbore to tell him that when she passed the hay-rick both boys were fast asleep, and that the pistol had dropped out of young Rigdon's hand.

"Take your cap, Rigdon," he shouted, "and get out of my house. I never wish to see you in it again. As for the pistol, I shall hand it over to your uncle, and recommend him to give you a taste of a rope's end. Not another word, sir, but go."

"Whisht!" cried old Willie, suddenly, in a tone of voice that made everyone start and look round. "See yonder," he said, pointing with his finger towards the open window; "what's' that strange light in the sky?"

All eyes were directed towards the window. The trees, and shrubs, and the slope of Sugarloaf Hill were bathed in a ruddy, flickering glare that evidently did

not proceed from the placid silvery beams of the moon.

At this moment a face appeared at the half-open door, a white and terrified face. It was the face of Matthew Baylis; and then his voice, which seemed hoarse and choked in its utterance, spoke thus:

*"Oh! father and mother, the ricks are on fire!"*

On hearing these terrible words, which seemed like a message from the invisible world, Mr. Baylis staggered back, and uttered a loud, despairing cry. The next moment he recovered himself, and grasping the pistol, which he had been holding mechanically in his hand, he hurled it with all the force of his powerful right arm at Dicky Rigdon's head. The boy spied the coming danger, ducked his head, and an instant later sprang nimbly out of the open window, and disappeared among the shrubbery. Unfortunately, the pistol

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was loaded, and at the moment of its rebound from the wall, against which it had been thrown with such violence, it exploded and burst into several pieces. A portion of the lock struck Mrs. Baylis on the head, and to the horror of the unfortunate farmer he saw her, as the smoke of the explosion cleared away, stretched apparently lifeless on the floor, with a small stream of blood trickling down her face. He sank into a chair, stupefied. Willie Pershore tried to arouse him, but was unable to make any impression upon him; till at length the faithful old labourer, in a state of mind bordering on desperation, rushed out to try and save some portion of the ricks, which were by this time, under the influence of a strong easterly breeze, lapped in a sheet of flame. John Baylis the younger and Martha had enough to do in attending to the wounded wife and the distracted husband.

## CHAPTER III.

## FLIGHT.

MATTHEW BAYLIS, standing in the passage, saw the flash and heard the report of the pistol as it exploded, but he did not see Dicky Rigdon jump out of window, and he fancied that his father had deliberately fired at his companion, and had killed him. He was so shocked and terrified by all that had happened in the brief space of a few minutes, that without staying to think, he snatched up his cap from the peg on which it hung, and ran away from the house, not caring whither he went.

One road was as good to him as another, provided only that it took him away from Snape Farm, and as it happened, he ran down the lane which led to Croxhaven. As he rushed swiftly along, his thoughts were something of this sort: "Is this only a

horrid dream, a night-mare from which I shall presently wake up, or are the ricks really on fire? It can't be a dream," he said to himself, as he turned his head, and saw the red glare in the sky; "but who could have set them on fire? I'm sure we didn't. Oh! what a wicked woman Martha is! It was she who worked father up into such a passion; it was she who made him shoot Dicky. I do believe it was she who set the ricks on fire to spite us!"

Matthew had just reached a sharp turn in the road, when his meditations were interrupted by the sound of approaching voices. He at once climbed the high bank which bordered the roadside, got through a gap in the hedge, and hid himself. Presently six or seven men came by, cottagers living in the neighbourhood, who had been aroused by the sight of the fire, and were now loudly arguing among themselves as to where it was. Some said it was only a



few fields off—and they were nearest the truth—while one man declared that if they walked ten miles they would not come up with it. This man carried a gun in his hand, and had a big dog at his heels. The dog scented Matthew, and rushed up the steep bank barking furiously. Matthew felt so like a culprit at that moment that he would not, on any account, have been discovered. Yet he very narrowly escaped being found out, for the owner of the gun vowed that there must be a stoat or a polecat hiding near at hand, and if his companions had not pressed him to hurry on he would have discharged his fowling-piece at random into the hedge. In another minute the eager, excited assemblage had passed on, and by degrees the sound of their voices died away in the distance.

Then Matthew cautiously climbed down the bank, with the intention of re-commencing his journey. That side of the road

was hidden in deep shadow, and just as he had reached level ground, he stumbled against some person, who immediately seized him firmly by the collar. A moment later his assailant relaxed his grasp, and a familiar voice said, "Why, Mat, how come you here?"

"Oh, Dicky!" exclaimed Mat, without replying to the question, "I thought you were shot dead."

"So I should have been if I hadn't jumped out of window, for your father deliberately aimed the pistol at me. He is mad, as mad as a mad bull or a mad dog, and you have done quite right to run away, for he will kill you if you go back."

Master Rigdon did not speak altogether truly when he said this. He knew that Mr. Baylis had only thrown the pistol at him, and as he had afterwards returned and had peeped in at the window, he knew that Mrs. Baylis had been seriously wounded.

But as he had made up his own mind to run away—for he feared the wrath of his uncle Benjamin, the pilot—he determined to frighten Matthew into going with him. So he said nothing about Mrs. Baylis's injury, being well aware that the boy would go back at any risk if he knew how badly hurt his mother had been.

“Did you meet Jemmy Atkinson and the others?” asked Matthew.

“Yes, they came right upon me before I could hide myself. I told them I was going to Croxhaven for the fire engine. Come along, Mat, let's step out as hard as we can.”

Matthew was still in such a state of excitement that he scarcely knew what he was doing, so he obeyed Dick Rigdon, and walked swiftly along. It was quite late when they reached Croxhaven, and most of the inhabitants of the little sea-port had gone to bed. The boys went down to the

quay, and being tired with their hurried walk, they seated themselves on the steps of a landing-place where two or three boats were moored. The easterly breeze was blowing freshly, and the surface of the harbour was rippled with little dancing waves, which sparkled in the brilliant moonlight. The *Cassiopeia* was still lying in the middle of the basin, but Dicky Rigdon's eye, accustomed to look upon shipping, detected an alteration in her appearance since he had last seen her. Her sails had been bent on to the yards; her standing rigging was taut and trim, and she was evidently ready for an immediate departure.

"I say, Mat," he said, as he idly dipped the toe of his boot into the water that plashed against the steps, "don't you wish you were aboard of her?"

Matthew made no reply for a minute or two. The long walk, during which he had

remained remarkably silent, had caused his excitement to cool down. At length he said :

“ I think, Dick, I shall go back home. It seems so cruel to run away at such a time as this.”

“ Very well, my boy,” answered Dick. “ Do so, if you please. My mind is made up.”

‘ To do what ?’

‘ To offer myself as a volunteer on board the *Cassiopeia*. We heard this morning that they were short-handed.”

“ I should like to go too,” said Matthew, “ but I wish I had my father’s consent.”

“ Go back and ask it,” returned Dick with a sneer. “ He’ll give it you fast enough, I warrant ! Your brother John will give you something else : a dressing with the cart whip. Indeed, I shouldn’t be surprised if he handed you over to the police. Nothing will make him believe that we didn’t set the ricks on fire.”

Matthew sighed. "I feel very miserable, Dick," he said; "I don't know what to do."

"Then I do," cried his companion, cheerily; and as he spoke he jumped into the nearest boat, and began to unloose the painter from the ring-bolt to which it was fastened. "Look, there's a pair of sculls aboard. Come, Mat, you must help me to row to the *Cassiopeia*, else how shall I get the boat back again? Jump in!"

Matthew stepped in mechanically, still feeling as if he was in a kind of dream. The moment he had entered the boat Dick took up one of the sculls, pushed vigorously out from the quay, and then, dropping both sculls into the rowlocks, began to pull towards the *Cassiopeia*.

A name painted on the stern-sheets caught Matthew's attention. "Dick!" he exclaimed, "we mustn't take this boat, she belongs to the *Cassiopeia*."

"All the better," cried the reckless

Dick ; " perhaps they've forgotten her, and left her behind. They'll be much obliged to us for bringing her alongside."

While the lads were discussing this question, the door of a tavern which stood on the quay was opened, and two men came out. One of them, a short, squat, broad-shouldered fellow, dressed in seaman's clothes, was evidently somewhat the worse for liquor, for he staggered in his gait, and leant heavily on his comrade, as they made their way towards the water-side. His comrade was a tall, thin young man, of rather dandified appearance, wearing a white hat, a cutaway coat, and a massive gold chain at his waistcoat.

"For she's the darling of my heart, sweet Peggy of Torbay," murmured the sailor, in a hoarse yet sentimental voice, very much out of tune. "I say, Mr. Tyrrell," he said, suddenly changing to

prose ; " is this the water ? The fog's got into my eyes."

" Yes, yes," answered the young man, pettishly ; " that's the water, and you'd better have a care, or you'll tumble head foremost into it, and go down five fathoms deep. Bother these Jack Tars !" he continued, speaking to himself ; " I never wish to go on a long-shore cruise with one of them again. They told me Rawlins was the soberest of men, yet here he is in such a helpless condition that I shall have to row him aboard." For while Tyrrell was indulging in this soliloquy, Mr. Rawlins had quietly seated himself on the steps, upon the very spot occupied a few minutes before by Dick and Matthew, and with his head bent upon his breast, was apparently making active preparations for going to sleep. " Rawlins," cried the young man, as he gave his shoulder a hearty shake ; " Rawlins, can you pick



out our boat from these? for I'm sure I can't."

At these words Mr. Rawlins roused himself, opened his eyes, and gazed vacantly around. "Which is our boat, Mr. Tyrrell?" he muttered, sleepily. Then suddenly, as if a ray of intelligence had pierced the recesses of his bemuddled brain, he exclaimed, pointing towards Dick and Harry, who sat motionless, and wondering who these new comers might be: "Why, yonder she is, Mr. Tyrrell, and two of the hands waiting to take us aboard."

"Thank goodness!" murmured the young man; "then I shan't have the trouble of pulling you, my grog-smitten friend."

"Boat ahoy, therel!" roared Mr. Rawlins, temporarily regaining his faculties. "Is that the *Cassiopeia's* boat?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick, briskly.

"Then what d'ye mean by keeping two gentlemen waiting? Pull alongside, you

dogs, pull!" Here Mr. Rawlins gave vent to a tremendous yawn, and then, being completely exhausted by the effort, fell fast asleep.

"Pull alongside as quickly as you can, my lads," said Tyrrell, in a pleasant but somewhat authoritative tone, "and help me to lift"—he was going to say "this gentleman," but he could not resist indulging in a little bit of sarcasm, so he said, "to lift one of your officers on board."

Dick winked at Matthew, as much as to say, "That's a bit of information for us," and then proceeded to assist the young man in lifting Mr. Rawlins, who was by this time fast asleep and snoring, into the boat.

"I'll take the tiller ropes, but I won't promise to steer very correctly," observed Tyrrell, as they pushed off from the shore.

This remark at once proved to Dick, whose naturally sharp faculties were now strained to the utmost by the peculiar

position in which he was placed, that the dandified young gentleman in the stern-sheets could not be, as he had at first fancied, the great Captain Cruikshank himself. It was not, after all, such an unnatural supposition, for very young men are sometimes appointed, through interest, to the command of large vessels. As for poor Matthew, he was so bewildered by all he had gone through during the last few hours, that he quietly bent to his oar without heeding anything.

Mr. Tyrrell's next observation was still more welcome to Dick, who was watching, like a hungry robin on a winter's day, for every crumb of information which he could pick up.

"As I see you are fresh hands, shipped, I presume, this morning, by Mr. Rawlins, I suppose you don't know who I am?"

"No, sir," replied Dick, with the utmost deference in his tone.

"Then I wish you at once to know," pursued Tyrrell, "in order that you may treat me with proper respect, that I am the son of the principal owner of the *Cassiopeia*, and that I am making this voyage as supercargo."

Dick touched his cap respectfully, and Matthew said, "Aye, aye, sir," which was not exactly the proper reply to make; but as Dick afterwards remarked, it sounded nautical, and no doubt pleased Tyrrell, who at that time was far better acquainted with the technical terms of the hunting-field than with the phraseology of the sea.

As they drew near the *Cassiopeia*, the boys perceived there was plenty of bustle and animation aboard of her, in spite of the lateness of the hour, and moreover, that the arrival of the boat was anxiously expected. He took the opportunity of whispering to Matthew, "Nothing but impudence will carry us safely through,"

and then hailed the noble vessel in proper seaman-like style. In obedience to a gruff order, delivered from the deck, the davits were immediately manned by some half-dozen of the crew, and a few moments later the boat and all its contents being hauled up, Matthew and Dick found themselves on a level with the top of the bulwarks.

"Well, Captain Cruikshank, here we are at last," said Tyrrell, as he shook hands familiarly with a tough, wiry, weather-beaten, red-whiskered man, of five-and-fifty.

'And, indeed, I'm well pleased to see ye, sir," replied the captain, whose accent proclaimed him a native of North Britain; "for the pilot's been aboard these two hours, and I'm thinking we'll be losing this propitious breeze before long." Here the supercargo spoke a few words in his ear, which caused Captain Cruikshank to fix a keen glance on Mr. Rawlins, who had managed to flounder out of the boat on to

the deck, and now stood blinking sleepily at the mainmast. "Aye, aye," continued the captain, in a lower tone, "I perceive the cause of the delay preceesely. Rawlins, get awa' to your bunk, man ; get awa', and dinna disgrace yerself before the hands."

As he spoke these words, Mr. Rawlins slunk aft, and then the captain said, turning sharply on Dick and Matthew, "And who are these twa lads?"

Matthew wished the deck would open under his feet and allow him to sink below, as he had once seen a malignant fairy disappear from the boards of the Croxhaven Theatre ; but he was somewhat relieved when Tyrrell replied—

"Two fresh hands, shipped by Rawlins this morning."

"They're ower juveneel for the wark, but they're likely-looking boys," observed Captain Cruikshank. He then at once changed the subject by saying to Tyrrell,

in an anxious tone, "We'd best up anchor at once, sir, and be off. *Fugit, fugit, irreparabile tempus*, as our minister used to say, and I misdoubt me this northeasterly breeze is dying away. Therefore I'll away below, and deliver the *Cassiopeia* over to the tender mercies of the Croxhaven pilot."

Within a few minutes after he had thus spoken, the ship became, to the fancy of an unpractised landsman, a scene of unbridled riot and confusion. Half-a-dozen hoarse voices seemed to be shouting orders all at the same moment; the planks of the deck resounded with the heavy measured tramp of the men who were working the capstan; the chain cable clanged, as its successive lengths rattled through the hawse-holes; while a select body of topmen, who swarmed up the ratlines as actively as monkeys, proceeded to shake out the sails, under the violent adjurations of the boatswain. Dick

and Matthew, being hustled hither and thither, and not knowing what to do, or from whom they ought to take orders, finally took refuge under the shadow of the very boat which had brought them from the shore.

‘Well, old fellow,’ whispered Dick, “thus far we’ve managed capitally, haven’t we?”

“But are we really going to stay on board,” asked Matthew, “till we reach Calcutta?”

“Stay on board? Of course we are; unless the skipper finds out our tricks and sends us ashore.”

“What are we to do for clothes, Dick? We have none, except those which we wear.”

“We’ll see about that to-morrow, Mat. The point now to be considered is, where we are to berth to-night. I’m tired out; and as for you, Mat, you can hardly keep



your eyes open. Let me see." And Dick began to meditate.

His meditations were cut short by an unexpected incident. The pilot, who had hitherto been giving his commands from the poop, being annoyed because some of his orders had not been immediately executed, rushed angrily into the waist of the ship, and began to abuse Mr. Watts, the chief officer. He paused close by the spot where Dick and Matthew were crouching, and as at that moment the moon passed out of a dark cloud which had obscured her light, her silvery rays fell directly on his rubicund face. Dick clutched his companion's arm with a movement of terror. "It's Uncle Benjamin!" he whispered. "If he sees us, we're ruined. I thought he was safe at Belfast."

Dick was quite justified in supposing that it would be impossible to meet his uncle on board the *Cassiopeia*. Mr. Rigdon

had been summoned over to Belfast, where he was well known and highly valued, for the purpose of taking a foreign vessel down the Irish Channel, a job that would occupy at least a week; but at the last moment he had received news that the foreigner's departure was delayed, so had accepted the task of piloting the *Cassiopeia* among the dangerous shoals and sandbanks that lay between Croxhaven and the open sea.

"We must not let him see us," said Dick. "Look! the moon is just going behind a cloud again. Watch your opportunity, and climb into the boat. We will lie there till Uncle Ben goes ashore."

A spare studding-sail had been thrown over the boat; so the two lads hid themselves under it, and made themselves as comfortable as they could.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE VOYAGE BEGINS BADLY.

DURING the night the wind shifted to the westward, so that the yards were braced up sharp; the studding sails were not wanted, and consequently the two boys were left undisturbed. Being thoroughly fatigued by all the exciting events of the preceding day, they soon fell asleep, and slept as soundly as if they had been in their beds at home.

The change of wind produced a change of weather. The breeze still continued so light that the royals were set; but the atmosphere, which hitherto had been perfectly clear, became thick and hazy. A bright look-out was therefore kept on deck. At daybreak, the Dunster light-ship, whose green revolving light had been for some

time visible, was seen looming through the mist. She was a queer-looking craft, something like a child's Noah's Ark, and was painted bright red. She was moored at the edge of the great Dunster Shoal, and was placed expressly to mark the termination of that dangerous sand-bank. As the daylight grew stronger, Mr. Watts, the chief mate, who had not forgiven the pilot his rough language while they were getting up the anchor—for he held that it was subversive of discipline to abuse an officer in the presence of the crew—remarked to the captain that he didn't at all fancy the colour of the water, and would he give orders to heave the lead?

"Ye'd better speak to Rigdon," replied cautious Captain Cruikshank; "I've no authority while he's aboard."

So Mr. Watts returned to the deck, and expressed his uneasiness to the pilot.

"The colour of the water puzzles me

too," replied the pilot, "and I've known this coast for forty year. I never saw it look dirtier after a heavy gale of wind, and we haven't had anything that can be called a breeze for weeks. Heave the lead by all means."

"I believe we're too near the shore," said Mr. Watts. "If the fog was to lift, it's my opinion you'd see the land close to us."

"Nonsense, man! I'm taking your ship exactly the same course as I've taken hundreds of others. I always keep a mile, at least, to seaward of the light-ship, and if"—

He was interrupted by the approach of one of the look-out men.

"If you please, sir, the light-ship is signalling us."

"Fetch my glass," said Mr. Watts.

It was difficult to discern anything clearly on account of the mist, but there was evidently a flag flying from the peak of

the light-vessel, and, as far as Mr. Watts could make out, the colour of the flag was red. .

“That’s their signal of distress,” observed Mr. Rigdon. “There’s something the matter aboard the old *Geranium*, that’s certain.”

By this time everybody on the *Cassiopeia’s* deck was gazing, with eyes of eager curiosity, at the light-ship, wondering what was amiss with her. The leadsman, who had been summoned to take soundings, forbore to heave his plummet overboard, and stared with the rest. While they were looking, a bright flash and a puff of white smoke broke from the side of the *Geranium*. She had fired one of her guns, a six-pound carronade, which stood on her deck for signalling purposes.

“There’s something wrong aboard, that’s certain,” repeated Mr. Rigdon, more emphatically than before.

Yes, there was something wrong on board, but not on board the vessel where Mr. Rigdon supposed the mischief to be. The people assembled on the *Cassiopeia's* deck were in the act of speculating on the probable nature of the distress aboard the *Geranium*. "Perhaps," said one, "a murder has been committed there, and we ought at once to lower a boat and go to her assistance." They were gossiping thus, and the leadsman was still standing with his line poised in his hand, when—

Let us pause for a moment, and turn to look at our two runaway friends, Dick and Matthew. Matthew was still curled up fast asleep under the friendly studding-sail, dreaming most likely of the turnip-sowing in the Long Croft, or of some such unseamanlike business. Dick, however, was broad awake, and every now and then he peeped cautiously over the gunwale of the boat, just as a wary old rat peeps out of his



MR. TORKINGTON LETS HIS TRAY FALL UPON THE DECK.





hole when there is a terrier about. The keen morning air made him feel pleasantly hungry, and he looked with covetous eyes on a tray containing two cups of coffee and two slices of toast which our old friend Mr. Torkington was carrying from the cook's galley towards the cabin. Dick was just thinking how nicely the coffee and toast would line his stomach, and how much more he wanted such refreshment than either Captain Cruikshank or Mr. Tyrrell, when suddenly he experienced a shock, or rather a series of shocks. Had he been on shore, he would have fancied it an earthquake; as it was, it seemed as if some mighty monster had risen out of the depths of the sea, and had taken the *Cassiopeia* on its back. The shock was so violent that Matthew started up from his dreams with a cry of alarm. Mr. Torkington let his tray fall upon the deck, and all those who were below, dressed or undressed, came

rushing up with terror depicted on their countenances. As for Mr. Rigdon, the pilot, the first shock nearly threw him off his feet; he steadied himself, however, by clinging to the rigging, and then cast a glance over the vessel's side. As soon as he had done so, he uttered a deep groan, his usually red face became almost purple, he fell heavily forward, and lay with the blood flowing copiously from his nose. The ship was in such a state of confusion that for some time nobody paid any attention to him. A very few minutes sufficed to inform everybody of the disaster which had befallen them. The *Cassiopeia* had grounded on the dreaded Dunster Shoal, and already the carpenter reported that there were four inches of water in the well. Dick and Matthew got out of the boat, and boldly mingled with the crowd, for every one was too much occupied to pay any attention to them; indeed Dick, who, under

the most trying circumstances, retained a cool head, had actually managed to appropriate those two precious pieces of toast, which were being trodden under foot, muttering to himself as he did so that self-preservation is the first law of nature. He was not, however, so selfish as to keep all his provision for himself; on the contrary, he thrust one piece into Matthew's unwilling hand. The carpenter now reported nine inches of water in the well, whereupon an order was given to man the pumps; and Dick and Matthew, anxious to be employed, at once took up their stations.

Mr. Rawlins, whom Dick now discovered to be the second mate, presided over the pumps. Except that his eyes looked glazed, and his broad coarse face sallow, he had almost got over the outward effects of the carousal of the previous night, but he had also parted with all his joviality. A racking headache, added to the unfor-

tunate mishap which had befallen the *Cassiopeia* at the very outset of the voyage, had made him exceedingly ill-tempered.

"Who are you?" he said, gruffly, to Dick.

"One of the new hands, sir."

"Who shipped you?"

"You did, sir," replied the imperturbable Dick.

"I don't recollect it."

"Ask Mr. Tyrrell, sir," pursued Dick.

"Yes, I suppose it's all right," continued the mate, with a sigh. "Confound that rum-punch!" he muttered. "Now, I'll tell you what, you two young uns, you'll have to work smart aboard this ship; I'll have no skulking. D'ye hear?"

Dick and Matthew both replied, "Aye, aye, sir," and then set to work pumping with a hearty goodwill.

If it had come on to blow, and the sea

had got up, most likely before many hours the *Cassiopeia* would have been a hopeless wreck ; but the breeze continued quite light and the sea smooth. It was fortunate also that the Dunster Shoal was composed, not of rocks, but of soft sand.

As by degrees order was restored, some of the hands picked up Mr. Rigdon, whose involuntary blood-letting had probably saved him from an apoplectic fit, and carried him down into the captain's cabin. The poor old man was totally dejected, and afflicted with the deepest melancholy. "Forty years on the coast," he murmured, "and to run a vessel ashore such weather as this! I must be daft." Confidence began to be somewhat restored, when the carpenter informed Captain Cruikshank that the pumps were keeping the leak well under control, and the people grew still more cheerful when a boat arrived from the *Geranium* and informed them that the *Cassiopeia* had

grounded nearly at the end of ebb-tide, and that, as it was then the season of spring-tides, there was a fair prospect of floating her off with the flood.

The boat's crew from the light-ship, moreover, told the people on board the stranded vessel something still more extraordinary than this : they showed them how it was that they had got on to the shoal, without any blame attaching to Pilot Rigdon. During the night, the *Geranium*, from some cause at present unexplained, had drifted from her moorings, and had floated fully three miles nearer the coast. Had the morning been clear the pilot would have seen, by the different aspect of the coast line, that he had got astray of the proper channel ; but as the morning was thick, he had nothing to guide him but the muddy colour of the water. Directly the crew of the light-ship discovered the strange accident which had befallen them, and saw a large vessel,

drawing upwards of twenty feet of water, making right across the sandbank, they at once endeavoured to warn her of her perilous position by hoisting their danger-flag and firing a gun.

Mr. Rigdon was much comforted when he heard this news, for it exonerated him from what would otherwise have been a piece of wilful blundering; but he was too much weakened by the shock he had received to resume active duty. He issued his instructions however, as he lay in the cabin, with much clearness to Captain Cruikshank, as to the best mode of extricating the *Cassiopeia* from the sandbank. While the tide was still ebbing it was of course not possible to do anything, except to keep down the leak in her hold. As the waters which supported her enormous bulk gradually receded from her she began to heel over in an alarming manner, so that it was almost impossible to walk the deck; but her timbers were stout



and strong, and her cargo, fortunately, except a bottom layer of salt by way of ballast, was chiefly composed of light and buoyant articles. No injury therefore resulted.

At last the moment of lowest tide arrived, and a large strip of sand within a hundred yards of the vessel was completely uncovered. All the boats were then manned and lowered into the water, and the sails, which had been taken in as soon as the accident occurred, were kept in readiness for immediate setting. The value of Mr. Rigdon's advice now became apparent. He was so thoroughly acquainted with the peculiar configuration of the sandbanks on that dangerous coast that he had a complete ground plan of them, as it were, in his mind's eye, and he knew that the *Cassiopeia* had grounded on the edge of a sort of gulf, where the water was deep, but which was surrounded on three sides by shallows. On the fourth side there was a narrow channel,

along which he hoped to conduct her into the open sea. He was now, therefore, brought on deck, and slung in a hammock in the mizen-rigging, from which point of observation he could see all that was going on and issue his orders accordingly.

For a long time the crews of the various boats remained motionless, seated on their thwarts, with their oars feathered, ready to pull, as soon as the word of command was given, at a stout warp which had been attached to the stem of the stranded vessel, for she had run stern-foremost on to the bank. With anxious eyes they watched the strip of naked sand, which was gradually being covered by the advancing tide. Meanwhile Captain Cruikshank was anxiously consulting the barometer, which had begun to fall ever since daylight. The fog had cleared away, and the bold headlands of the coast appeared dangerously close at hand. A breeze, which was each moment increasing

in strength, began to whistle among the shrouds, and the little waves danced angrily against the sides of the stout old *Cassiopeia*, as though they would willingly do her a mischief.

At length, Pilot Rigdon, raising himself in his hammock, gave the long-expected word of command ; immediately all the oars dipped into the water, and the warp was pulled taut. The crew tugged with all their force, but for some time the vessel refused to budge an inch ; every moment, however, the rising tide gave her increasing buoyancy, and at last a joyful cry arose, " She moves ! she moves !" At this juncture the square sails were set and the yards backed, and within five minutes the great ship slid smoothly and gently into five fathoms of water. A loud and involuntary cheer rose from every throat ; but the vessel was not yet out of danger, for she was in a diminutive hollow, hemmed in by sandbanks, and it was necessary to get

her head round, so as to face the narrow channel which led to the open sea. There was no room to wear her, so the operation of tacking was performed, and cleverly performed too, by the hands who had been retained on board, among whom Dick and Matthew rendered themselves conspicuous by their activity and energy. Another anxious period followed, and then Pilot Rigdon exclaimed, "She is safe now, thank God!"

The *Cassiopeia* had not escaped a moment too soon from her imprisonment, for within half an hour a spanking westerly breeze was blowing, a rough sea began to get up, and before long the pilot ordered the top-gallant sails to be taken in.

## CHAPTER V.

## OUT IN BLUE WATER.

A PERIOD of several days in the history of our two adventurers may be passed over pretty rapidly. It is enough to observe that Mr. Rigdon quitted the *Cassiopeia* without any notion that his scapegrace of a nephew was on board of her, and that, the weather being rather rough for some days after leaving the British coast, Matthew suffered severely from sickness.

“Seasick, eh?” quoth Mr. Rawlins, as he saw the poor boy sitting on the spare spars with a face as pale as ashes. “I’ll soon cure yer. Go and ask the doctor for a bucket of slush.”

Matthew rose slowly from his seat, and in obedience to the second mate’s orders, tottered away towards the chief cabin.

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Mr. O'Halloran was going out to India, to practise as a surgeon in a tea-planting district, and had obtained his cabin passage on board the *Cassiopeia* at a reduced rate on condition of his physicking the ships' company. Matthew encountered this gentleman at the foot of the companion. Mr. O'Halloran, who at all times was an irascible personage, was particularly out of temper at that moment, having been called away from a comfortable game of chess with the supercargo for the purpose of extracting a tooth from the mouth of an unlucky foretopman. In fact, he held the tooth in his forceps as Matthew descended, and was just bidding his patient be off, and not make a mess with his blood on the cabin floor.

"So it's your great ugly carcase," said he, turning to Matthew, "that was blocking out the light while I was in the act of performing a delicate operation!"

"I'm very sorry, sir," answered Matthew.

"Sorry! If I had broken his jaw, I'd have had you up for manslaughter. Now what d'ye want with me?"

"Please, sir, Mr. Rawlins told me to ask you for a bucket of slush."

"A bucket of hwhat?" roared O'Halloran.

"Of slush, sir," answered Matthew, a blush rising to his pale face.

"I say, Tyrrell, for goodness' sake come here!" Whereupon the supercargo, who was lolling on the cabin sofa, rose lazily, and sauntered to the doorway.

"My young friend of Croxhaven Harbour," observed Tyrrell, as he surveyed Matthew through an eyeglass. "What's the row, doctor?"

"I want your advice; I've been grossly insulted by that fellow, Rawlins. Do you mane to tell me, sir," he said, turning to Matthew, "that Mr. Rawlins sent you with that message?"

"Indeed, he did, sir," answered poor Matthew, who began to feel that somehow or other he was getting into a terrible scrape.

"Then I'll let Mr. Rawlins know that an Irish gentleman, and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, is not to be insulted with impunity."

At this moment the second mate descended into the cabin.

"Why, here he is," exclaimed the enraged surgeon, "actually come to beard me to my face! Do you know what these are, Mr. Rawlins?" he continued, as he put his hand within two inches of the mate's face. "These are my forefinger and thumb, ready to tweak the nose of any person who dares to offer me a particle of impertinence."

"What's the matter now, Doctor?" demanded Rawlins, utterly at a loss to understand the reason for O'Halloran's wrath.



"You sent this boy to me?"

"I never sent him to you at all—the stupid young lubber—I sent him to the cook for a bucket of slush."

"You told me to go to the doctor, sir," said Matthew.

"If I said 'doctor,' I meant 'cook,'" observed Rawlins.

Tyrrell broke out into a laugh. "Ha! ha!" he said, "I understand it all now. My young friend," he continued, turning to Matthew, "I'm as much a landsman as you are, but I've learnt one thing since I came aboard, which apparently you haven't. On board ship the cook is frequently called the doctor; but you must never mistake the doctor for the cook."

On hearing this explanation Mr. O'Halloran expressed himself perfectly satisfied, shook the second mate warmly by the hand, and offered, in token of his renewed friendship, to bleed or blister him on the spot.

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As soon as Matthew had procured the bucket of slush, Mr. Rawlins set him to work to slush down the foremast, and as soon as that dirty job was accomplished, he told him to act as deputy to Jammy Ducks, as the functionary is named on board ship whose business it is to feed and tend the live stock. Thus Matthew found himself placed in charge of those very porkers which had come from his father's farm. The sight of the pigs brought the tears into his eyes, but he resolved to let nobody see him crying, so he wiped them away, and set cheerfully and resolutely to work. All sorts of dirty jobs fell to his lot; he waited with the tar-pot on the men who were employed in tarring the rigging, and got many a splash over his only jacket; he emptied the ashes from the cook's galley, and, on the first occasion of performing the office, threw them, in his landlubber's ignorance, to windward, so that they blew back into his

eyes, and nearly blinded him. But he was so good-natured and obliging that the crew soon grew to like him, and Jemmy Ducks, who though only an ordinary seaman was one of the handiest fellows aboard the ship, offered to make him a suit of genuine sailor's toggery, if he could by any means come at the materials.

As for Dicky Rigdon, he "fell on his legs," as the saying goes, directly he emerged from his concealment on the morning of the accident. He had plenty of brass and impudence in his composition, was always ready with an answer, besides, he had been at sea before, and was able to go aloft. Moreover, as soon as he found that his uncle, the pilot, had become popular on board the *Cassiopeia*—his popularity was due to the skilful manner in which he handled her after the accident—Master Dick boldly proclaimed his relationship, proving the fact to the assembled



FRONTISPIECE.



forecastle, who were at first unwilling to believe him, by showing his name, marked at full length, upon his Guernsey shirt.

After all the buffetings of the stormy British seas and the ever-restless Bay of Biscay, it is a delightful change to run into the north-east trades. The gallant old *Cassiopeia* flew before the balmy tropical breeze like a duck, as the sailors phrased it. For days together the sails needed scarcely any attention—an occasional haul upon a brace was all that was required—and most of the hands were to be seen seated on the deck like so many Turks, stitching away at new sails, patching up old sails, making sennet, or parcelling ropes. Luckily for Matthew, who was always being put to some unpleasant job by Mr. Rawlins, in order, as that gentleman expressed it, to take the hayseed out of his hair, he attracted the attention of the carpenter, who discovered that he had a mechanical turn. No one

ever troubles himself about the carpenter's Christian and surname on board ship; he is always known as "Chips," and this particular "Chips" was a good-humoured, steady-going old fellow. He had been very much bothered by the leak which the *Cassiopeia* had sprung when she grounded, and had never been able to repair it completely. Matthew asked to be allowed to descend into the hold, and after a careful inspection while there, made a suggestion of a very simple nature, which had never entered the worthy carpenter's head, and which, when adopted, prevented the leak from being troublesome any longer. Matthew now began to find ship life much more endurable. The weather was so delightful, the sky so brilliantly blue, there were such shoals of flying fish, some of which occasionally lighted on the deck; there were such beautiful golden-coloured dolphins sporting around the bows, and nautiluses

floating past, with their purple sails spread; while at night the moon shone with such a glorious radiance, and the water sparkled with such a phosphoric light, that Matthew gradually became reconciled to his new mode of existence. One thing, however, troubled the poor lad sorely. His outward man (or "boy" shall we call it?) was terribly shabby. Splashes of tar and grease, and repeated salt-water duckings, had ruined his only suit of clothes, and he was conscious, moreover, that he did not look like a working sailor, but like an ill-dressed boy ashore.

Hitherto, the Sundays had been so stormy that there had been no mustering of the crew, but next Sunday it was understood that the muster would take place, and that divine service would be performed on the poop. It was on a Tuesday morning that Matthew came into the cook's galley with the lid of a harness-cask which he had been



repairing for that functionary. Mr. Torkington, the steward, chanced to be in the galley, discussing with the cook the all-important topic of the cuddy dinner

“He’s a handy young fellow,” observed the cook, aside to the steward.

“Stop a minute, my boy,” said Mr. Torkington, as Matthew was turning to go away; “I want to speak a word to you. I’ve never opened my lips to either of you two boys as yet, because I suspect you’re both runaways,”—here Matthew blushed,—“and I don’t like to encourage runaways, especially when they run away from a comfortable home like Snape Farm. So I determined to let you rough it for a while. Now don’t you fancy, young gentleman, that Captain Cruikshank knows nothing of how you came aboard—perhaps he knows more than you fancy,”—here Matthew grew redder than ever,—“but that’s not what I want to say now. This is what I want to

say: You two young scapegraces came aboard without any kits, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not even a blanket, or an extra pair of trousers. Well, I'm going to serve you with a proper rig-out from my stores."

"It's very kind of you, Mr. Torkington," began Matthew.

"Don't talk about kindness, sir; the kit will be charged against your wages—that is, if Captain Cruikshank chooses at the end of the voyage to give you any wages. And, now, my boy," continued the steward in a kinder tone, for his harshness was only assumed, "step aside for a minute, and tell me why you came aboard the *Cassiopeia*. I want the whole story, you must make a clean breast of it. You needn't fear to tell me, for this is the fourteenth voyage I've sailed with Captain Cruikshank."

Hereupon Matthew, not without shedding some natural tears, told the whole

of his tale, concealing nothing, and adding nothing.

“As I suspected, that young monkey of a Rigdon was the tempter. You needn’t fear, I shan’t harm him. And now, Baylis, continue to be a good lad ; go on as you have begun, so that when we come home, I may be able to give such a character of you to your father and mother, that they will feel comforted. And I’m sure, after what you’ve told me, they’ll need comfort.”

Here Matthew, who was a soft-hearted fellow, fairly burst into a fit of weeping, but as he had plenty of work to do, he soon checked himself, and went back to the company of Mr. Chips, who wanted him to help in adzing a plank

The result of this conversation was that with the supply obtained from Mr. Torkington’s stores, and with the aid of Jemmy Ducks’ ingenious tailoring, both Matthew and Dick made a very creditable appear-

ance when the crew were mustered on the Sunday following.

On board a large vessel like the *Cassiopeia*, the chief steward is always a person of some importance, especially when he has been long in the service, and Matthew soon began to feel in various indirect ways the benefit of Mr. Torkington's friendship. Mr. Rawlins, for instance, who was by nature a bit of a bully, and who was annoyed with himself to think that he had shipped these two lads while under the influence of liquor, had revenged himself by setting Matthew to do all the dirtiest and most disagreeable jobs on board the vessel; but now, perceiving that the boy was a favourite of Mr. Torkington's, he began to change his behaviour. No officer on board ship is so dependent on the steward as the second mate; the steward can make his life comfortable or uncomfortable, just as he pleases. The second

mate always remains on deck while the captain and chief officers are taking their meals, and therefore is supposed only to come in for their leavings. He can't grumble if he finds that his superiors have eaten up all the delicacies, the lobscouse, for instance, or the seapie, or the roast fowl, and left him nothing but salt beef or pork, as tough as mahogany; he can't grumble if he is obliged to drink rum and water, while the captain has been indulging in Allsopp's or Bass's ale. A friendly steward can, if he chooses, always put aside some of these good things for the second mate, and as Mr. Rawlins was fond of good eating, he found it worth his while to behave with some civility towards Matthew; he allowed him to go aloft occasionally, and did not give him more than his fair share of dirty work.

When the *Cassiopeia* got within a few degrees of the equator, the north-east trade-

wind, which had gradually become lighter and more fickle, died away altogether, and the vessel was becalmed. The weather was now rather too warm for comfort, and the sun stood right overhead, so that a man standing on the deck at mid-day was as shadowless as Peter Schlemihl in the German story; the sails flapped idly against the masts as the vessel rocked gently to and fro; the sea lost its fresh, wholesome appearance, looking as oily as if a home-ward-bound whaler had emptied her cargo overboard; besides which, the empty casks, and potato-parings, and all the indescribable rubbish which is daily cast out of a vessel, gathered round her, just as the twigs and straws gather round the body of a dead cat in a pond. For some time past, few of the sailors had cared to sleep in the close and stifling forecabin; they now with one accord laid their blankets on the deck. The inmates of the cabin

imitated their example, and Mr. Tyrrell, who was a luxurious young gentleman, and who, being the owner's son, could do pretty much as he pleased, had a hammock slung in the mizen-rigging. As there was an awning spread over the whole poop, this hammock formed a very pleasant resting-place, and there the dandified young supercargo used to lie a great part of the day, dressed in a China silk coat and white duck trousers, smoking cigars and reading novels. The people before the mast were not so well off, for they were exposed to the pitiless rays of the sun by day and to the noxious beams of the moon by night. In using the word noxious, we adopt the universal belief of seamen, who always take the precaution of tying a handkerchief over their heads, or of covering their faces, when they sleep on deck on a moonlight night. Matthew asked Chips if he shared this belief. The old man replied that he certainly did; that he had

known a man who, having taken too much grog while lying in the Canton river aboard of a tea ship, went to sleep looking the moon full in the face, and in the morning "his face was 'drawed' all to one side, like one of them ugly images in a Chinese joss-house;" and though before this he had been a good-looking fellow enough, ever after that he went by the name of "Old Nutcrackers."

Besides the intolerable heat and closeness, the crew suffered from two other inconveniences during this period of calm weather. The *Cassiopeia* had on her last voyage brought home a cargo of sugar, a sort of freight that is apt to breed insects; and now that the hot weather had set in, a host of cockroaches, which had hitherto been lying hid under the skin of the ship, came out of their lurking-places by thousands. They ate everything they could set their teeth into, tumbled into the beef-kids,



got scalded to death in the pannikin of tea which a man was going to drink, blundered into people's faces when they were sauntering about to catch a breath of air after sunset—there was a story told with some glee in the forecastle, that one of them had come with such a bang against Mr. Rawlins as to give him a bloody nose—worse than all, when the crew were asleep these voracious wretches came and gnawed the hair from their heads and the skin from the tips of their fingers. The other annoyance was perhaps even worse than this. Some careless person took the lid off the principal water-tank and neglected to put it on again. Now the rats, which are always to be found on board ship, are thirsty creatures; in-somuch that a cask of water is generally left open in the hold for their especial benefit. For the most part they manage their drinking very cleverly. Sailors declare that if they can't reach the water with

their mouths they dip their tails in, and slake their thirst by sucking them. But the rats on board the *Cassiopeia* were most probably old-fashioned folks, unaccustomed to drink from iron tanks. Three or four of them fell in and were drowned, and their bodies becoming putrefied, infected the water to such a degree that its smell and taste were quite disgusting. The inhabitants of the chief cabin suffered comparatively little inconvenience, for they had plenty of ale and porter; and Mr. Tyrrell had a choice assortment of raspberry, strawberry, and lemon syrups, with which he contrived to disguise the nauseous flavour of the water; but the poor fellows on the main deck had no such consolation, until Mr. Torkington persuaded the captain to issue an extra ration of sugar and lime-juice.

What made it more tantalising was that a large part of the *Cassiopeia's* cargo

consisted of ale, porter, and wine, and some of the more rebellious hands declared that before long they meant to break into the hold and help themselves. Matthew did not relish this horribly-flavoured decoction of dead rats any better than the others, and often, when drinking off his pannikin of tea or coffee at a gulp, holding his nose as if it had been a black draught, his memory vividly recalled the clear and sparkling streams which rushed down the green mossy sides of the hills in his native county.

There was a good deal of grumbling in the forecastle about this time. Some of the men declared—sailors are apt to think themselves wiser than their officers—that Captain Cruikshank, instead of keeping well to the westward, had hugged the African coast too closely, and had got his ship into a dreaded region of the North Atlantic known as the Doldrums, where the

wind never blows unless it blows a hurricane, and where the rain falls not in drops but in hogsheads. As the sky was quite clear when these men spoke thus, several of their listeners expressed a wish that a few of these hogsheads would tumble on board.

During this wearisome calm, which lasted upwards of a fortnight, one or two adventures occurred which served to vary the monotony of existence. In spite of the oily unwholesome look of the water, Mr. Tyrrell, vigorously backed by O'Halloran, who was a skilful swimmer, took it into his head that a bathe would be a very nice amusement. As Captain Cruikshank was always ready to humour the son of his employer, he ordered the necessary preparations to be made. One of the square sails, to the sides of which four spars were fastened, was lowered over the stern, thus forming a commodious bath, into which none of the voracious monsters of the

deep could enter. Tyrrell, O'Halloran, and Watts the chief officer, were the first to strip and descend into the sail, where they enjoyed a delightful and refreshing bath. When they had amused themselves sufficiently, the captain told the second mate that if he or any of the people forward wanted a dip, now was the time to take it. Rawlins, who was a good swimmer, gladly accepted the offer, but he was only joined by Dick, Matthew, and three or four others; for seamen, though they spend the greater part of their lives on the water, are not, as a rule, partial to being in it, and they can seldom swim.

Old Chips, having an hour to spare from his work, was amusing himself just below the poop-ladder by trying to catch a shark. He had a stout line, and a formidable hook baited with a piece of salt pork. Several times he had seen the fin of a prodigious monster projecting above

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the surface of the water, and he had sung out "'Ware shark!" as a warning to the swimmers, but they paid no attention to him. A shark's mouth, as is well known, is more like a square door than an ordinary mouth, and it would be impossible for him to bite a piece out of a sail filled with water. So Dick and Matthew enjoyed their dip amazingly, and indulged in all sorts of gambols. They might, one would think, have felt shy of Mr. Rawlins, but he did not seem like the second mate when he had his clothes off; he was only a bather like themselves. Still more they might have feared the savage wolves of the ocean, some of whom, without doubt, were lurking close beneath the sail, eager to taste human flesh and drink human blood. But they trusted to the protection of the frail piece of canvas, and felt no alarm. At length Captain Cruikshank, who was leaning over the taffrail, exclaimed, "Come, lads, I think

ye've had as much *aqua marina* as is beneficial for yer constitutions. A' oot! a' oot!" Upon this order being given all the bathers scrambled up the mizen-chains, except Mr. Rawlins. "One more swim, sir," he said, "now that I've got the basin all to myself, and then I'll come out too." The second mate was proud of his skill, and now that he had plenty of space he proceeded to go through some clever antics in the water. All of a sudden he uttered a loud cry of terror, and flew up in the air just as if he had been tossed in a blanket. The voracious shark had evidently butted at the outstretched sail like a battering-ram, in order to dislodge his prey. Unluckily, Rawlins fell on one of the spars, and tumbled into the water outside the sail. A moment later the fin of the monster was seen above the water close by Rawlins' body. He had not lost his presence of mind, but kicked out vigorously, as he







MAKING FREE WITH THE CAPTAIN'S DINNER.

endeavoured to climb over the spars and regain a place of safety within the sail. Chips, hearing the cry, rushed on to the poop, fishing-line in hand. At the same instant, Mr. Torkington, intent on his own business, came from the galley bearing a dish which emitted a fragrant smell. To his astonishment, Chips rushed up to him like a madman, flung away the dish-cover, seized the roast loin of fresh pork, scalding his fingers in the process, stuck it on to the shark-hook, and lowered it into the water, as near as possible to the spot where the second mate was struggling. Master Shark instantly scented the savoury morsel, far superior to tough salt junk, better even than a live second mate. He abandoned Rawlins, who contrived a few moments later to scramble into the sail again, and got back aboard not much the worse for his adventure.

Almost at the same instant, there was

a cry of "Shark! shark!" and a dozen stalwart fellows, pulling as if they were hauling the main sheet home, dragged a monster sixteen feet long on to the deck. The best of the fun was that the loin of pork was still in his mouth, but this was kept a close secret from the economical skipper, who was led to believe that it had gone overboard; so Chips and a party of select friends had it for dinner, and said it was none the worse for having first been tasted by a shark. The shark was soon dispatched, and some of his flesh cooked. Matthew tasted it, but did not fancy it much, for it was very stringy and flavourless.

Captain Cruikshank received Mr. Rawlins with one of his dry jests, which was of course reported all over the ship:—"Weel, Rawlins, I'm not preceesely certain that I'm glad to see ye back again. Had the shark made a meal of ye, I could have

created anither second mate in an instant, but I canna create anither loin of pork for my denner."

Before relating the second adventure which befel the *Cassiopeia* during the calm, it may be interesting to give some of the opinions entertained by the inhabitants of the forecastle concerning their brethren in the chief cabin. Captain Cruikshank was a man who prided himself on his book-learning and scientific attainments; but although he had been on the salt water during the greater part of his life, the sailors declared that he was not a really practical seaman. He was not particularly popular in the forecastle, because, though a good-natured man, who never punished if he could help it, he was accused of stinginess. Mr. Torkington had some difficulty in obtaining his permission to serve out clothing to our two volunteers, and he grumbled terribly at the extra ration of

sugar and limejuice. He could not bear to use a new sail if an old one could be patched up; and he was accused by his enemies of having sacrificed much valuable time, and a good deal of canvas, by this false economy. Mr. Watts, the chief mate, was an excellent officer; a strict disciplinarian, but always just and impartial. He was more popular than the captain. The second mate is seldom liked aboard ship. The other officers regard him as merely a superior foremast hand, while the men view him as an emissary from the cabin. Mr. Rawlins was neither very much liked nor respected, but he was a good seaman, possessed plenty of energy, and was not a bad-natured fellow at bottom. O'Halloran, the doctor, was detested. The crew declared that he treated them like dogs. He was tolerably skilful in his profession, and careful in attending to the men's ailments, but he seemed to have no idea that the feel-

ings of poor people are as easily wounded as those of gentlefolks. He addressed the men in the same brutal, high-handed style which he had been accustomed to apply to the professional beggars of his native country. Tyrrell, on the contrary, was very civil to the crew, but he was not much better liked than O'Halloran. They hated him for his dandyism, his effeminacy, and his laziness. The most popular person in the cabin was Torkington, the cabin steward. He was always doing some little kindness or other for the men, and they thoroughly appreciated his intentions.

Now for the second adventure. It was a stifling hot morning, though the sun had only just risen, and though the sky, which had for the last day or two been covered with a thin haze, was now obscured by a canopy of hard-edged, copper-coloured clouds. The calm still continued; there was not a breath of air, and the *Cassiopeia*

lay like a log on the waters. Presently one of the men, who had climbed to the topgallant crosstrees to set free a halyard that had got entangled, shouted out, "Sail on the starboard bow!" Everybody was very interested, and telescopes were immediately in requisition on the poop, for not a single vessel had been sighted since the *Cassiopeia* had crossed the Bay of Biscay. The stranger was presently discovered to be a screw steamer of moderate size, apparently in ballast, for her hull stood high out of water. She bore right down towards the *Cassiopeia*. When she was about two miles distant, Captain Cruikshank hoisted the British ensign, and the signal-flags showing the number of his vessel. Somewhat to his surprise, the steamer showed no colours in reply, and what was still more curious, in a few moments she altered her course, and began deliberately steaming round the *Cassiopeia*. She continued to act thus during

the whole of the forenoon, sometimes receding to a distance, and once approaching within a mile. Though her bulwarks were very low, no one was visible on her decks, except the helmsman, and one solitary figure on the look-out bridge, which ran athwart her main deck.

The people on board the *Cassiopeia* began to grow uncomfortable. What was she, and what did she mean? Captain Cruikshank ordered the two carronades to be loaded with shot, but they were mere pop-guns for any practical warlike purposes; he also served out among the most trustworthy of his crew the muskets and cutlasses which hung in the cabin. All sorts of opinions were bandied about; some said that she was a slaver which had been prevented by the British cruisers from getting her cargo of negroes on board and that she was determined to avenge her disappointment by committing an act of



piracy. Others thought she mistook the *Cassiopeia* for a cruiser, and was merely amusing herself by teasing her in her helpless condition. Others, who spoke below their breath in whispers, hinted that she was no real vessel at all, but a vision or *simulacrum*, a sort of Flying Dutchman of the Guinea coast, manned by the ghosts of men who had died of African fever. You, who read this account, may smile at these superstitious fancies, but they seemed strangely impressive to the inmates of the *Cassiopeia*, who were imprisoned, as it appeared, in "a painted ship upon a painted ocean," and over whose heads a pall of ink-black funereal clouds was slowly gathering.

At 2 P.M. it became so dark that the strange steamer was no longer visible; and then, in an instant, as if the windows of heaven had literally been opened, without a breath of wind or a flash of lightning, the rain poured down. Matthew

had been bred in one of the rainiest districts in England, but as much water fell on the *Cassiopeia's* deck in a few minutes as would fall upon the same area of surface at Snape Farm in several weeks. Everybody stripped off their clothes, and stood for a while enjoying the delicious shower-bath, which washed off the briny accumulations that had gathered on their skins. The hogsheads had been placed in readiness upon the deck, and the contents of the water tank were suffered to run to waste; Matthew being instructed to enter it, and bring out all the dead rats he could find.

For two whole days the gloomy deluge poured down, then the rain abated and a gentle breeze sprung up, which wafted the *Cassiopeia* across the equinoctial line. No more was seen of the strange steamer, and therefore her singular behaviour to this day remains a mystery.

## CHAPTER VI.

## THE LAST NIGHT ON BOARD.

MATTHEW BAYLIS saw the equinoctial line quite distinctly through the carpenter's telescope. Mischievous old Chips did not tell him that he had fastened a black thread across the object-glass. You must excuse Matthew's simplicity, and remember that he was, after all, only a country bumpkin. Just as he had finished staring at the line, he heard a sound like that of a trumpet, which seemed to come from the water immediately beneath the ship. He asked Dick, what fish that could be that made such a strange noise. Dick, in reply, bade him look over the ship's side and see for himself. To his astonishment, Matthew beheld a venerable figure, with a long white beard and a sort of crown upon his head, climbing the main-chains.

"Who is it?" whispered Matthew in Chips's ear.

"It's King Neptune, come to hold a Court on board the *Cassiopeia*," replied the carpenter, with the utmost gravity.

Matthew then remembered that he had heard something before about a strange ceremony which took place when the line was crossed, and he very soon perceived that King Neptune was no inhabitant of the finny deep, but Jack Wright, a smart young foretopman, whose crown was made of brown paper, and his beard of tow. We will not describe all the formalities of Neptune's Court; they have been related over and over again. It is enough to say that Matthew, whose unassuming and obliging disposition had made him a general favourite, was let off very easily; but Dick, who was apt to be impudent and saucy, was "served out to rights," as Jemmy Ducks phrased it. As

Dick, though this was his first trip across the equator, had been across the Banks of Newfoundland, where it is the custom for sailors to perform a similar ceremony, he had hoped to get off scot-free, and had intended to have a good laugh over Matthew's installation. But when Dick pleaded that he had already crossed the Banks, and therefore was free of Neptune's Court, the monarch gravely replied that he was delighted to make the acquaintance of such a distinguished person, that he could not think of suffering any one to stand in his presence who had visited the cod fisheries; Dick must come and sit by his side. At these words, two courtiers conducted Dick to a tub, over which a piece of sail-cloth was stretched, and seated him upon it.

"But," said his Majesty, suddenly, after staring very seriously in Dick's face, "are you aware, Mr. Newfoundlander, that,

except for kings" (here he stroked his own flowing beard), "whiskers have gone out of fashion? Our friend must be shaved."

In vain did the unlucky Dick protest that he had not a hair on his face, which was, in truth, as smooth as a girl's. A terrible functionary presently made his appearance, styling himself the Royal Barber, with a rusty iron hoop in one hand and a bucket in the other containing a horrible compound of slush and filth. Dick's face was lathered with this abomination; then the lather was scraped off with the rusty hoop, which made several severe scratches on his skin; then the shaving brush was forced into his mouth; and then the corners of the sail-cloth were suddenly let go, so that Dick went souse into the tub, which was full of water. He did not entirely recover from this rough treatment for some days, and Matthew felt

quite sorry for him ; but the discipline did Dick good, at all events it caused him to keep his impudent tongue under control.

Matthew was rather glad to get out of the sweltering heat, and drenching rains, and tantalising calms of the tropics, into the bracing chilliness and rough weather of the higher latitudes. Besides, in those regions there were new and entirely strange sights to be seen. Great whales blowing off their steam, as if they carried a boiler and piston in their heads ; shoals of black fish, great monsters many times bigger than porpoises, yet equally fond of play and frolic ; numbers of Cape pigeons, molly hawks, and albatrosses, which diligently followed the ship all day for the sake of picking up any eatable scraps that were thrown overboard, and then, when night fell, tucked their heads snugly beneath their wings, and slept on the surface of the sea quite as comfortably as a

delicate lady sleeps with a feather bed under her and an eider-down quilt above her.

The *Cassiopeia* weathered the Cape of Good Hope prosperously enough, and did not receive more than her fair allowance of storms. Then she turned her head northwards, and once more the sea grew smoother and the sun more scorching. The hands in the fore-castle began to count the time, and to lay wagers with each other as to the day upon which they would cast anchor in the Hooghly, and many yarns were spun concerning the delights of a day's liberty ashore in Calcutta. The south-east trade wind was remarkably strong and steady, and carried the vessel merrily past the island of Mauritius. As the sun was still on the other side of the equator, the nights were cool and fresh, so that everybody preferred their berths and blankets rather than the deck. Little did any one imagine that the



*Cassiopeia* was approaching the last hour of her existence.

That part of the Indian Ocean which lies to the northward of Madagascar is studded with reefs and shoals. Captain Cruikshank had accordingly ordered a careful look-out to be kept on deck. It was a fine night, moonless but starlight, a moderate breeze was blowing, every available stitch of canvas was set, and the ship was bowling along at the rate of nine knots an hour. The captain, having taken his ordinary observation of the sun the previous day, was under no apprehension of danger, and went to bed as usual, leaving the deck in charge of the second mate. Mr. Rawlins stationed a look-out man on the foreyard, and then proceeded to take things easy, leaning over the bulwarks and watching the creamy, phosphorescent water as it rushed past the ship. It was also Matthew's watch on deck, and he was standing in the bows,

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gazing dreamily along the bowsprit, and trying to make a picture in his mind's eye of the old farmhouse at home. The middle watch was nearly over, and Mr. Rawlins, after trying vainly to make out the hour on his pocket timepiece by the feeble light of the stars, descended to the cabin to look at the clock. Had he returned at once, he would have ordered Matthew to strike the bell, and the sound would have startled the look-out man on the foreyard, who was, it is to be feared, nodding at his post, for sailors can fall asleep in very uncomfortable positions. But there chanced to be a half-finished glass of brandy and water on the cuddy table, and the second mate, unable to resist the temptation, spent two fatal minutes in drinking it. Meantime, Matthew, looking along the bowsprit, fancied that he saw a peculiarly white look in the tract of water that lay in advance of the ship. He jumped down from his perch and ran to tell Mr.

Rawlins, whom he met in the act of descending from the poop-ladder on to the main deck. He had scarcely opened his lips when he was thrown from his feet by a dreadful shock, which hurled him against the bulwarks, and left him for some seconds stunned and motionless. In an instant the most terrible confusion prevailed, the wheel flew round from hard-a-port to hard-a-starboard, striking the helmsman on the head, and fracturing his skull, while the look-out man on the foreyard was shaken out of the rigging and killed on the spot. The sleepers from below rushed on deck, for the most part half-naked, and with terror depicted in their faces. Captain Cruikshank was one of the first to make his appearance, and he seemed more cool and collected than any one else. He cast a rapid glance around, and perceived that the position of the *Cassiopeia* was hopeless. She had run upon a coral reef—a very

different substance from the soft yielding sand of the Dunster Shoal—and a furious surf was beating against her devoted sides. He at once gave orders to clear the masts away. All hands set to work with axes and tomahawks, and within the space of a few minutes mast after mast went crash! crash! crash! over the side. It was a sad sight to see her tall spars falling like trees of the forest, but it was the only way to save her from immediate destruction.

As it appeared certain that before long she would be broken to pieces by the violence of the waves, the carpenter, assisted by Matthew and some of the handiest of the crew, began to construct a raft from the spars and planks which were scattered about in all directions, while others endeavoured to extricate the boats from the mass of tackling and broken yards with which they were encumbered. They first began with the long-boat, which had hitherto

served as an abiding-place for the sheep and pigs. These poor animals, as may be imagined, were bleating and squeaking piteously. As soon as the sailors could come at them they lifted them one by one out of the boat and threw them into the sea, trusting that their instinct would lead some of them at least to reach some reef which projected above the water. Just then joyful shouts arose of "A sail! a sail!" The hopes excited by these cheering words were speedily extinguished. The supposed vessel proved to be a line of craggy rocks. But the knowledge that there was some dry ground within an easy distance caused the sailors who were clearing the long boat to redouble their efforts, and before long she was safely lowered into the water. In spite of the threats and remonstrances of the officers, all discipline seemed for a time to be at an end, and about thirty of the youngest and most active people on board,

violently thrusting everybody aside who was weaker than themselves, sprang into the boat. Among them was O'Halloran, the surgeon, a great broad-shouldered fellow, who ought, as Captain Cruikshank remarked, to have set a better example.

"But I don't envy them," he said to Tyrrell. "If the long-boat presairves her equileebrium in such a surf as this," (the captain could not help talking polysyllabically even in the near prospect of death) "it'll be clean contrairy to all known pheelsical laws." Tyrrell's behaviour surprised the sailors. In the presence of danger his drawling voice and languid manner vanished; he stripped off his pea-jacket, which he had the good luck to secure at the moment he was aroused by the shock, and taking up a tomahawk, worked, if not with much dexterity, at any rate with thorough heartiness. By this time the swift-advancing day of the tropics was beginning to break, and the

long-boat was plainly visible as she shaped her perilous course towards the rugged line of rocks. Just as she reached the rocks, a tremendous surf broke over her, and all on board were thrown into the water. Their cries were heard on board the *Cassiopeia*. Some were drowned, others were dashed to pieces against the cruel coral barrier, but the greater number, though sorely bruised and wounded, contrived to scramble out of reach of the waves. The sea was now making a clean breach through the vessel amidships, and her cargo was being scattered about in all directions. Barrels of ale and porter, bales of cloth, and cases containing valuable assortments of watches, jewellery, perfumery, and other luxuries intended for the Indian market were to be seen floating on all sides.

The coolness of some of the sailors who remained on board astonished Matthew. He saw one of them coming deliberately

out of the chief cabin, where the water was now waist-deep, with an unconcerned face, and with a decanter of spirits in his hand, which he had taken from the captain's swing-tray. He took it to Captain Cruikshank, saying, "You may find a drop of comfort useful, sir." Before the captain had time to make any reply the man was again descending to the cabin, remarking, "I must fetch a quid of tobacco before I leave the old craft, and I know there's some in the steward's pantry." Once more he re-appeared, and then, saying "Good-bye, Captain Cruikshank! here goes!" coolly jumped overboard. He was one of the few men in the forecastle who was a skilful swimmer, and he was seen making his way towards the rocks with a bale of cloth under his arm, which he had captured, and which he used as a "fender" to keep off the pieces of timber that were dashing about on all sides.



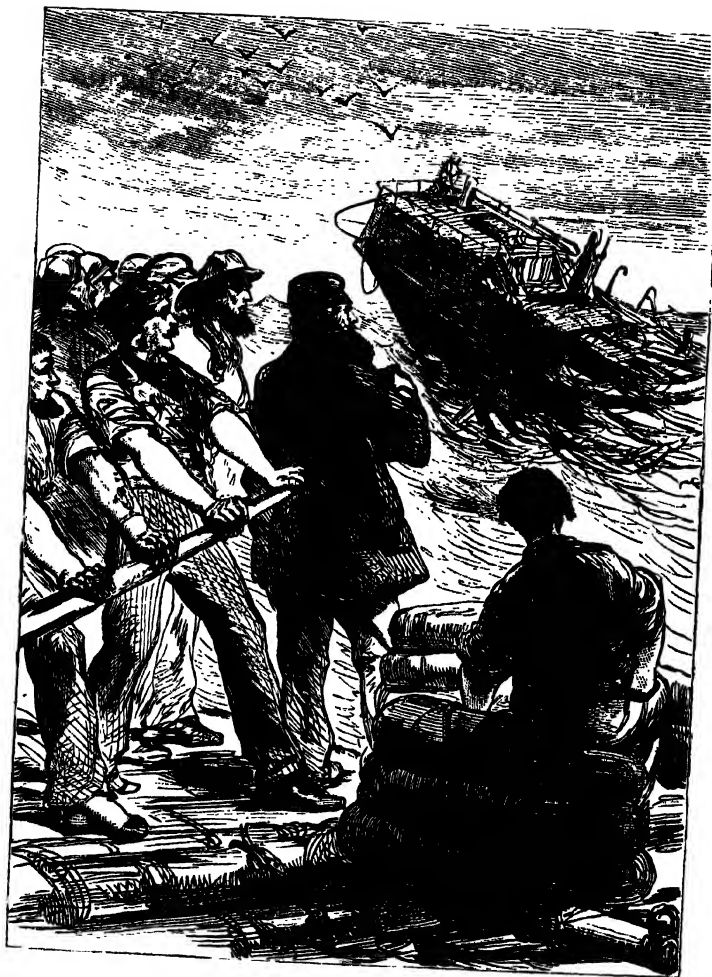
The carpenter and his mates worked with all their might, but they could not finish the raft in a moment. Meantime the situation of those who were left on board the *Cassiopeia* became every minute more critical. She was almost torn in two amidships; her after-part, where all the survivors who had not yet quitted the vessel were assembled, was on its beam-ends, so that it was scarcely possible to stand on the poop, while the violence of the surf drove this portion of the wreck backwards and forwards over the jagged rocks, every moment tearing fresh rents in her timbers. While the raft was preparing, the chief mate, Mr. Watts, aided by Mr. Torkington the steward, Jack Wright, Jemmy Ducks, and Dicky Rigdon, had managed to extricate the captain's gig from the rubbish in which she was buried, and got her ready for lowering into the sea. Mr. Watts then went and told the cap-

tain what he had done, saying, "Captain Cruikshank, don't wait for the raft, but take charge of the gig. Every instant is precious. Within a few minutes those who are not out of the wreck will be in eternity. Remember, you have a wife and family, your life is of more value than mine. There's nobody cares for me."

"Watts," replied the captain, "I'm obleeged to ye; but I canna tak yer offer. By all the rules of the sairvice, it's my bounden duty to be the ultimate individual to quit the *Cassiopeia*."

He had scarcely spoken these words when a wave of more than ordinary size struck the wreck, causing her to lurch frightfully, and throwing every one off their legs. Chips, Matthew, and one or two others were standing on the raft, which for safety's sake had been fastened to the stump of the mizen mast. The violence of the last shock broke the lashings, and

the raft glided swiftly into the water just as if it had been launched purposely. Those on board lost their footing, and Matthew fell into the sea, but he speedily climbed back again on board the raft. Mr. Tyrrell and the captain then threw the carpenter a rope, by which means the raft was brought alongside of the ship. Great care was needed to save her from being dashed to pieces, although Chips had done all he could to prevent such a catastrophe by lining her sides with bales of cloth. Then those of the ship's company who had resolved to entrust their lives to this frail craft jumped, one after another, on board of her. The last to leave was Captain Cruikshank, who refused to budge an inch till he had seen Mr. Watts and his party safely deposited in the gig. He then jumped on to the raft with as calm and cheerful a face as if he was going to be ferried across the Clyde at Greenock. He



ABOARD OF THE RAFT.



was not much too soon. The raft had scarcely reached a distance of a hundred yards from the wreck when the dismembered hinder part of the *Cassiopeia* rolled completely over, disappeared under the seething whirlpool of white water, and then, after a brief interval, rose to the surface in a thousand scattered fragments.

“Puir old lassie!” quoth the captain, heaving a deep sigh. “We’ve seen the last of her.”

“Better,” replied Tyrrell, who in company with three others was tugging at an enormous oar—“better that we should see the last of her, than that she should see the last of us.”

“But ye dinna consider my feelings, Mester Terrell. I’m a man of sensibilitiee. For five years past the *Cassiopeia* has been to me, when at sea, my *placens uxor*, the wife of my boosom, and I pairt from her with the sorrow of a sweetheart pairting from his *inamorqta*.”

At first, those who were on the raft envied the inmates of the boat. The gig was a lively little craft, and danced over the tops of the waves, while every surf broke over the clumsy raft. Tyrrell, Rawlins, and Matthew, who were all good swimmers, found it the best plan to take to swimming as each surf broke over them; the rest held held on as best they could to man-ropes, which had been stretched between her rudely-constructed bulwarks. But their envy of the gig did not last long. When the latter was within two hundred yards of the rocks she was struck by a heavy piece of timber, which stove in her bottom. She filled, and began to sink. The raft was immediately rowed towards her with a view of saving the crew. A rope was thrown out, and by its means Mr. Torkington and Jemmy Ducks managed to scramble on to the raft. Jack Wright and Dick Rigdon preferred trusting to their own exertions,

and struck out towards the rocks. Mr. Watts, the chief mate, was in a deplorable condition. He was sitting up to his middle in water in the injured boat, with his right arm frightfully crushed and mangled by a blow from a piece of floating timber. As the raft forged close alongside he endeavoured to spring on board, but he missed his footing and fell half-way into the water. All attempts to reach him were useless, and though ordinarily a skilful swimmer, he had but one arm to swim with, besides being rendered faint and giddy through pain and loss of blood.

“Good-bye, captain!” he murmured, as he rose to the surface for the last time; “Give my love to Annie. God bless us all!” And with these words, the poor fellow disappeared.

Men are very selfish at such a time as this, when they are themselves struggling in the grip of destruction. The death of



the mate made little apparent impression. Captain Cruikshank probably felt his loss the most. Watts had served with him ever since he had been an apprentice. Yet all he said was, "He was a good seaman, and if ever Annie Davidson hears of this, she'll wish she had been kinder to him."

At last, the wished-for moment came. The raft was alongside of the rocks. But for the protecting parapet of cloth-bales, she would have been dashed to pieces by the furious surf. All on board, however, reached the rugged shore. Most of them were nearly naked ; they were all exhausted, and sadly bruised and wounded. Still they had saved their lives. Matthew Baylis clambered feebly up the steep face of the rock, and then sank down in a swoon. When he came to himself he found Jack Wright standing over him, pouring a draught of beer into his parched mouth.

## CHAPTER VII.

## SHIPWRECKED SEAMEN.

THE surface of the reef presented an extraordinary spectacle. A short time before, its sole inhabitants had been a few sea-birds, and the only prizes washed to its barren shores were composed of the foliage of ocean forests. It was now covered with human beings, while every wave washed up a barrel, a bale of cloth, a case of valuable goods, or some other fragment from the ill-fated *Cassiopeia*. As for the shipwrecked sailors, they looked like the characters in a theatrical extravaganza, and at any other time their appearance would have created peals of laughter. They were wrapped in brilliant-coloured cloths, muslins and silks, while their heads were protected from the rays of the sun, which were now beginning

to pour fiercely down, by turbans, fancy caps, and fashionable ladies' bonnets. The delicate head-gear which had been intended for the adornment of some fair pale-faced beauty as she lolled in her luxurious carriage during the evening drive along the Calcutta Esplanade, was now perched above the bronzed and weather-beaten features of a Jack Tar. A supply of shoes would have been extremely welcome, for the people's feet were lacerated by the jagged surface of the coral reef, but none were forthcoming ; so, after dressing their wounds with pomatum, they wrapped them up in strips of cloth and muslin.

The articles thrown up from the wreck were of a most heterogeneous description. There were cases filled with lavender-water, perfumed soap, pomatum, and stationery ; there were numerous casks of ale and wine, and one or two of fresh water. Shortly afterwards appeared a couple of drowned

sheep, and some drowned fowls, a case of pine-apple cheese, a keg of flour, a keg of gunpowder which was uninjured by the water, and several pieces of beef and pork washed from the harness-casks, which had been lashed upon the main deck of the shipwrecked vessel. Among a great many articles of luxury of little use at such a time as this, one valuable prize was washed ashore, namely, the sailmaker's bag, containing his needles and other implements. Nor must we omit to mention the live stock. Five pigs and two sheep had reached the reef in safety. The pigs were fed on scented soap and pomatum; while a bale of pressed hay, which was fortunately stranded during the course of the day, served to keep the sheep from perishing. Little did Matthew dream, that evening when he displayed to Mr. Tor-kington his father's flourishing family of porkers, that he himself and some of

those very pigs were destined to be shipwrecked together on a desolate coral reef in the midst of the Indian Ocean. Altogether, compared with many persons who have undergone a similar calamity, the late inhabitants of the *Cassiopeia* were not badly off for provisions. Besides those which have been already enumerated, some of the people caught a young shark; and a few birds which inhabited the reef, being unused to the presence of destructive man, suffered themselves to be caught with surprising ease. No biscuits, however, had been recovered—a very serious deficiency—and the quantity of water secured would not last the ship's company long in that hot and thirsty climate.

The reef on which the *Cassiopeia* had been wrecked did not stand alone, but was connected, by a line of sand-banks, with a series of other reefs. Jack Wright, accompanied by Dicky Rigdon—they had both

swum ashore without accident—made an excursion for the purpose of exploring these reefs. They brought back news that none were preferable to that on which they had first landed, which, indeed, stood higher out of the water than any of them; but they said that barrels of beer and other articles were being thrown up along the whole line of coast.

Now it must not be supposed that Captain Cruikshank in his perilous position had an orderly, obedient body of persons to deal with. On the contrary, the majority of them soon fell under the influence of liquor, and some were openly mutinous. Mr. Rawlins, who, by the death of poor Watts, had risen to the dignity of chief mate, and who ought to have set a good example to the others, was seized with an unaccountable passion for strong drink directly he got on shore; he knocked in the head of a port-wine cask, and before long

was scarcely able to stand. Captain Cruikshank acted with decision. He at once deposed Mr. Rawlins from his office of mate, and appointed Jack Wright to fill his place. He then made a short address to the people; and told them that he was as much the captain and master of that reef and all its inhabitants as if it had been the deck of the *Cassiopeia*. "I am simply," said he, "expounding British law to ye, but I will not on sic an occasion as this enter into any needless technicalities." He concluded his oration by saying that he intended to uphold his authority, if necessary, by "pheetsical force."

Hereupon Mr. Rawlins insolently observed, that though he might be king of that reef he was not king of all the reefs, and that he would go where he could do as he pleased. "It's hard lines enough to be cast ashore through other people's bad management," he said, "but to be

tyrannised over after you are ashore is harder lines still. Who's for liberty, and as much beer as they like to drink?"

More than a dozen fellows shouted "Hurrah!" and held up their hands at these words. "Then follow me. We'll have an island all to ourselves."

Thereupon, the malcontents, fifteen in number, who were all more or less affected with drink, followed the ex-mate, each of them carrying one or more bottles of port wine in their hands, or at their waists.

"A good riddance of bad rubbish," observed Captain Cruikshank, when the mutineers had all taken their departure. Then, as though ashamed of having used so homely a proverb, he added, "Such a crew of ne'er-do-weels would indeed be a ruinous heritage—a *damnosa hæreditas*, as the Latin has it."

The worthy skipper then set actively to



work. He organised a watch, for the purpose of protecting the stores and provisions from plunder, placing all stores under the care of Mr. Torkington. He ordered the carpenter to try and repair the long-boat, which had been washed ashore with a great hole in her side; he instructed the sailmaker to make a tent, and fixed the scale of provisions at two ounces of flesh, and a dram of beer served in a coffee cup, twice a-day.

O'Halloran, the doctor, whose usefulness was impaired by the loss of all his drugs and instruments, was placed in charge of the water-casks. Though he had consulted his own personal safety in a very selfish manner, by leaping into the first boat, he was no coward among his fellow-men, and it needed a determined man, possessed of Herculean strength, to guard the water-casks from depredation under that scorching tropical sun. It was

a thankless though indispensable office ; the men hated O'Halloran more than before, and openly expressed a wish that he had been drowned instead of the chief mate.

Mr. Tyrrell devoted himself for the most part to a search for water. It was quite a sight to see this young man, who had been considered such an effeminate dandy, who had been accustomed to parade the poop with a pair of kid gloves on his hands to save them from being scorched by the sun, working away on his hands and knees with no better digging tools than the iron hoop from a cask, and a scollop shell. But, as the sailors remarked, in a few days he contrived to look more like a dandy than anybody else. His turban, of fine white muslin, was picturesquely and artistically twisted round his head ; his loose trousers, although made of the most brilliant scarlet cloth—it had been shipped for officers' full dress uniform—were cut

with an eye to symmetry ; while his feet were protected by a pair of sandals of his own devising, which at a distance did not look unlike ordinary slippers

It has already been observed that Captain Cruikshank was a man of a very economical turn ; indeed, some of his crew went so far as to say that he was the stingiest skipper they had ever sailed with, that he grudged them every ounce of food that went into their stomachs, and that, if he had not had a thoroughly good fellow for steward, he would have contrived some excuse for putting them on half-rations before they had been a month at sea.

A good deal of this sort of talk may be put down to Jack's inveterate propensity for grumbling ; still there can be no doubt that the worthy skipper, though an excellent and conscientious commander, was a close-fisted man, especially in dealing with his employers' property. If, then,

he could not endure to consume a single scrap of food that could be saved while his ship was making a prosperous voyage, it may be fancied that he would become a still greater screw when he and his crew were cast away on a barren coral reef, from which they saw no immediate prospect of release. As the few birds on the reef were soon killed or scared away, he became most anxious to discover some supply of food that would save him from dipping into the precious ship's stores, and he was always holding forth on the advantages of abstinence. "The amount of caloric requisite for the support of the human frame," he observed, "can be supplied by a varra small *quantum* of nutriment; it is merely our noxious habit of gorging our stomachs that makes us feel so often hungry."

This doctrine, to men who were subsisting on four ounces of pork a day, was not

very popular, but anyhow the captain practised what he preached, and some of the men declared that he derived all his own caloric by sucking at an old quid of tobacco, which had lain in his cheek ever since he left the Clyde. On the third day after the shipwreck, accordingly, he was delighted to hear that some of the men had found a moderate supply of muscles, limpets, and other small shell-fish among the rocks.

"Torkington," he exclaimed, "ye'll only serve out half-rations from this day forward; there's no food more succulent and more productive of caloric than shell-fish."

But the men rebelled against this edict, said that nothing should make them eat raw shell-fish while there was any other food left, and plainly hinted that if the skipper's orders were enforced they would go over and join the Beer Island gang, as the mutineers were called.

“We must cook the shell-fish,” quoth Captain Cruikshank, and forthwith set his wits to work to light a fire, a feat which nobody had hitherto been able to accomplish.

It is doubtful whether the skipper would have succeeded, had not a case been opportunely washed on shore which contained some glass. Some rags were smeared with wetted gunpowder, and were then placed in the sun to dry, and a spark was communicated to them by striking a piece of glass with a razor. There was plenty of timber for burning washed up from the wreck, and every one was glad to see a fire, for though the days were scorchingly hot, the nights were somewhat chilly.

Two or three of the hands, among whom was Dick Rigdon, were at once dispatched to search among the rocks and bring to the camp all the shell-fish they could find, and

it was while engaged in this duty that Dick and one of his companions made a discovery which excited the utmost horror and indignation. No man on board the *Cassiopeia*—the steward perhaps excepted—had been more popular or more highly respected than the late chief officer. The anger and distress of the survivors may therefore be conceived when Dick arrived at the camp stating that he and his comrade had found the body of Mr. Watts in a sequestered inlet of the reef, in a shocking state of mutilation. The head had been hacked off, probably to prevent the identification of the corpse, and one of the fingers had been cut or bitten off. On this finger Mr. Watts had worn a valuable diamond ring, presented to him as a testimonial of esteem by the passengers on his last voyage.

In spite of the loss of the head, which had most likely been buried in the sand, the body was at once identified as that of

Mr. Watts by a flannel shirt of peculiar pattern which was upon it. Accordingly, a spot was chosen in the sand, where a grave was dug, the headless trunk was carried thither and decently buried out of sight, while Captain Cruikshank pronounced a few simple yet solemn words from Scripture. He then exclaimed, in a loud tone, keenly fixing his eyes on each man in succession—

“And now who is it that hath done this accursed thing? To rob is at all times a crime, to rob the dead is a still baser crime; but to rob the dead at such a time as this, when our lives are hanging on a thread, and when we are surrounded by heaps of useless trinkets, all of which we would gladly exchange for a bag of bread—to mutilate the body of our poor faithful comrade for the sake of a miserable glittering stone, must be the work of a fiend. I’ve looked at all your faces, none of you flinch,



I believe you are all innocent; it must be some of those unmannerly dogs on the other reef."

All the people surrounding the captain asserted their innocence, and all demanded to be allowed to be led against the Beer Islanders, with whom the captain had hitherto strictly forbidden all communication. But Captain Cruikshank was opposed to anything which looked like a warlike demonstration. The Beer Islanders were reported to be in a perpetual state of intoxication, and the captain judged that if he went to their territory with a display of what he termed "pheesical force," a desperate affray would probably be the result.

"No," said he, "nobody shall go except myself and two others with me. You, Mr. Terrell, for one."

"Aye, aye!" said Tyrrell, briskly.

"And me for another," cried O'Halloran.

"Na, na, doctor: Ye're a braw man for a shindy, but ye're too valuable to be spared from the water-casks this thirsty day. I'll take the lad Rigdon, that found poor Watts' body. We'll need his evidence to prove what I may justly tairm the *corpus delicti*."

Within a few minutes, the captain, accompanied by Tyrrell and Dicky Rigdon, started on their errand, which was regarded by all the others as a somewhat perilous undertaking. They carried no weapons except a couple of rudely manufactured clubs and a razor-blade fastened into a wooden handle, for up to this time no fire-arms had been discovered. Captain Cruikshank was, however, a shrewd fellow, and knew pretty well what he was about. He was aware that the mutineers possessed no boat, and would sooner or later be at his mercy. He had therefore no desire to proceed to extremities with them, as he felt

convinced that before long they would be only too glad to return to their duty. Indeed it was whispered, that in his inmost heart the sly old skipper was delighted with the secession of sixteen stout hearty fellows, as it relieved him from the necessity of finding food for them. Anyhow, the brutal maltreatment to which the chief officer's body had been subjected formed a very good excuse for visiting Beer Island, in order that the captain might see with his own eyes how the mutineers were getting on.

Nearly two miles of sandbanks and rugged coral rocks had to be traversed before reaching the rival colony. The captain was half amused and half alarmed at the barbarous appearance presented by the mutineers. They were evidently ill supplied with clothing, for most of them were nearly naked, but every man carried a knife in his girdle, and a bottle of wine

hung round his waist. Their camp was formed of about twenty casks of porter, ranged in a semicircle, and the heads of these casks were staved in as they were wanted, the liquor being served out in a moderator lamp. The mutineers had, however, preserved some order in their orgies. They had seceded for the purpose of drinking as much beer as they pleased; but they soon found themselves obliged to observe some discipline, and the consequence was that at the time of the captain's visit, though they had all drunk freely, nobody was in a brutal state of intoxication. Mr. Rawlins, as Governor-in-Chief and Captain-General of this anti-temperance community, was the first person to come forward and confront the new comers. Somewhat to their alarm, as soon as he saw them approaching, the ex-mate stepped behind one of the porter barrels and returned with a rifle in his hand,

"Do you mean mischief, Captain Cruikshank?" he asked, suspiciously.

"If I did," answered the captain, drily, "I shouldna come here with these twa lads; I should have brought the whole *posse comitatus*. I want to say a word to all of ye."

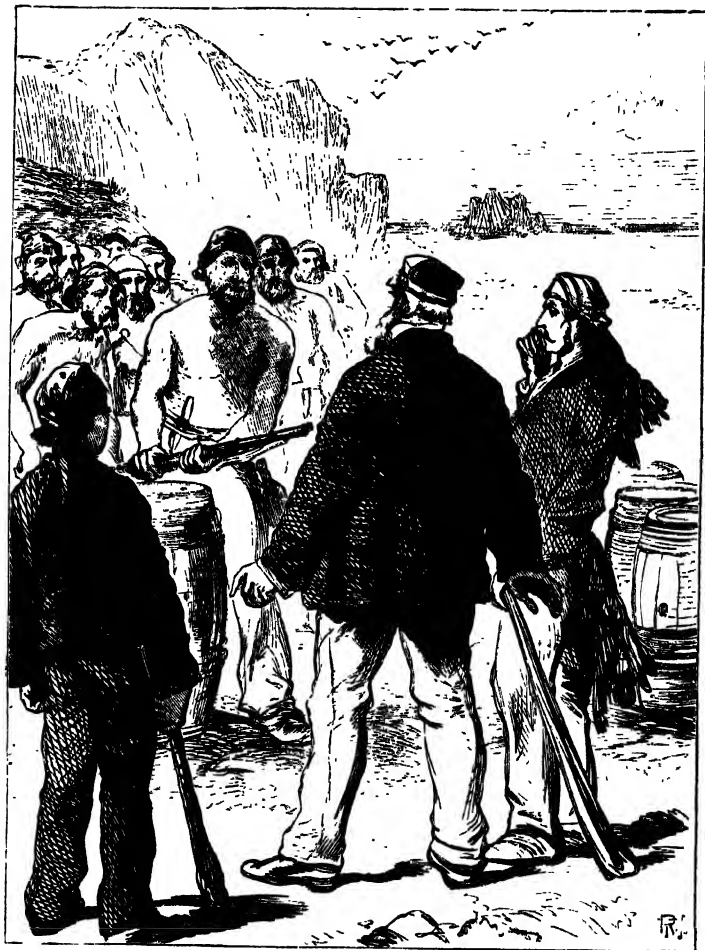
"Well, here we all are, captain," exclaimed several voices. The majority of the mutineers were getting tired of their liberty, and were anxious to be allowed to return to their allegiance.

"I miss twa faces," said the captain, as he scanned the countenances of the men assembled.

"Yes," answered Rawlins, "you miss Bill Barker and Tom Ellison; theyv'e set up for themselves half a mile further off."

"Wheels within wheels, mutinies within mutinies—eh, Mr. Terrell?"

The captain then briefly addressed the secessionists; but he neither alluded to



"DO YOU MEAN MISCHIEF, CAPTAIN CRUIKSHANK?"



their misconduct, nor did he offer them any immunity from punishment if they chose to return to their allegiance. He simply told them the story of the robbery and mutilation of Mr. Watts' body, and said that the perpetrator of the deed must be discovered. All hands present expressed the utmost horror and indignation at the crime which had been committed, and all asserted their innocence. Then two or three voices began to mutter something about Barker and Ellison.

"They were the two worst characters on board the *Cassiopeia*," observed Rawlins, "and since they've been here they've done nothing but quarrel, pilfer, and steal; so we turned 'em out of the camp."

"Let's go and seize 'em!" cried some one.

At these words the whole gang started off tumultuously, scattering themselves all over the sandbanks in the eagerness of the



pursuit. The whole area occupied by the reefs and shoals was of immense extent, and there were many nooks and crannies among the coral rocks, so that one or two men might easily escape observation.

Captain Cruikshank, Tyrrell, and Dick Rigdon, who had all kept together for safety's sake, were the first to come upon the retreat of the two men whose behaviour had been found even too bad for the Beer Island gang to endure. They had obtained shelter in a small low-browed cave, situated at the water's edge, and at the moment of the captain's arrival were engaged in a violent altercation. The love of gain appeared to be so strong in the bosoms of these two wretches, that though they had nothing but raw shell-fish to eat, they were quarrelling furiously about a gold watch which each asserted to be his property. Each of them had a muslin belt suspended round his waist, containing hundreds of

pounds' worth of valuable goods, such as watches, brooches, bracelets, finger-rings, and ear-rings ; yet they squabbled over this watch as earnestly "as if," said Tyrrell, "it had been a pound of biscuit." Just as the captain was about to shout to them (for they were so engrossed in their dispute that they had not perceived his approach) Barker, provoked at his companion's obstinacy, struck him a violent blow in the face, whereupon Ellison retorted with a push. Barker, who was standing at the very edge of the cave, lost his footing and fell into the sea. The water was shallow, but the surf was beating in with great fury. He was knocked down by a wave and dashed against the rocks, and by the time his body was recovered by the exertions of the captain and his companions, all the life had been knocked out of it. Ellison was at once secured, bound, and rigorously searched. All the property found upon

him appeared, however, to belong to the general plunder from the wreck, till, having managed to get one of his hands loose, he was observed to lift it to his ear, and thence to his mouth. Rawlins sprang forward and seized him by the throat, while another man harshly forced his jaws open. Underneath his tongue lay Mr. Watts' diamond ring.

"Kill him at once! Hang him up! Fling him into the surf!" Such were the savage shouts that arose from the rest of the mutineers.

"Lads!" exclaimed the captain, "if ye are determined to put this miserable caitiff to death, I and my two comrades are powerless to prevent it; but let me warn ye that it is an illegal act, involving the penalty of the gallows. The British law has a sair long arm, and can reach all the way from the Old Bailey to the Indian Ocean. Ye had best hand him over to my custody,

though it is hard that I should be compelled to furnish bodily proveesion for sic a worthless vagabond."

In the opinion of the sailors, Ellison added to the baseness of his conduct by declaring that it was the dead man, Barker, who had cut off Mr. Watts' head and bitten off his finger, and that he had merely bought the diamond ring from him in exchange for some jewellery.

On quitting Beer Island the captain roundly told the mutineers, that as they had chosen to desert him, they had better stop where they were. Then, having ascertained from one of the men that though they possessed three rifles they had no powder, the crafty old Scot addressed Mr. Rawlins thus—

"Mind ye, I mak no promises which might amount to a condonation of the offences ye have committed, and might expose me to a prosecution for barratry, that

is, for conspiring in concert with the crew against the owners of the ship. But your future treatment will depend on your present conduct; I therefore call upon ye to deliver up these three guns, which, as ye are without a particle of ammunition, can be of no possible uteelity. And as I obsairve that ye have caught some fish—an operation in which we have hitherto been unsuccessful—by making fish-hooks out of the mainsprings of watches and chronometers, and nets from strips of muslin, I have no objection to give ye a piece of beef or pork in exchange for a fair piscatory equeevalent."

As, however, the captain's idea of a "fair piscatory equivalent" was five pounds of fish in exchange for one pound of beef or pork, the barter carried on between the rival colonies was not very brisk. For several days after his return nothing very particular occurred; the carpenter and his

mates worked steadily at the repair of the long-boat, and good hopes were entertained that within a short time she would be ready for sea. At first, Ellison was kept in close custody ; but as he appeared perfectly submissive, and as men could be ill spared to guard him, he was, after a few days, set at liberty. Shortly afterwards he disappeared, and no tidings could be heard of him, either at Beer Island or elsewhere.

Two important discoveries now took place, which caused the people to forget their late prisoner. First, a quadrant was picked up, and an observation of the sun being taken, Captain Cruikshank pronounced that they had been wrecked on a reef called the Cargados Carajos, and that the island of Mauritius was distant about 250 miles, in a direction bearing S.W. by S. He made this statement from memory, for he possessed neither chart nor compass. This news had scarcely run through the

camp when three hearty cheers were heard to proceed from a group of men near the waterside. Tyrrell's persevering efforts had at last been crowned with success. He had dug in the sand, and found water. It was milky in colour and brackish in taste, but still drinkable. The captain at once ordered that some of the empty wine and beer casks should be filled from this source, in case the supply should fail. On the following evening, Chips announced that his work was completed. The long-boat, which the sailors hopefully christened by the title of the *Liberator*, was pronounced to be ready for sea.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A BOAT VOYAGE.

WITHOUT an hour's delay, Captain Cruikshank proceeded to select a crew for the *Liberator*. Jack Wright, the smartest foretopman on board the *Cassiopeia*, who had now become Mr. Wright, the newly-created chief officer, was appointed to command the little craft, and eight others were associated with him. Among these were the carpenter, and his deputy, Matthew Baylis. The following stores were then put on board :—a few pieces of beef and pork, some cakes made of flour and water by Mr. Torkington, the chief steward ; a pineapple cheese — exported for the table of some Anglo-Indian epicure—eight gallons of ale, sixteen gallons of water, six bottles of wine, and three



bottles of cherry brandy. The *Liberator* was provided with three masts furnished with lug-sails, eight oars, some bales of cloth for ballast, two rifles, and some gunpowder. Besides this, she carried the quadrant, two watches, and a log-reel; but she had neither chart nor compass. Without these last invaluable appliances, a voyage of at least 250 miles across an unknown sea was an enterprise of no small peril; and Jack Wright, conscious that a number of lives, his own included, were dependent on his exertions, resolved to spare no pains to ensure success. With this aim in view, he passed the greater part of the night before the intended voyage alone in the open air, carefully studying the position of the Southern Cross and other important constellations.

While thus engaged an incident occurred which made a strong impression on a mind predisposed, as the minds of most sailors

are, to superstition. Upon lowering his gaze from the sky, upon which his eyes had been fixed with the most earnest attention for many successive minutes, he observed a figure, apparently almost naked, standing with outstretched arms on the summit of a neighbouring rock. To Jack's horror, the figure appeared to be headless! A chill of supernatural terror crept over him; he averted his face, and when he next ventured to look the vision had disappeared. Jack firmly believed that he had seen the spirit of the late chief officer; but he prudently determined to keep the fact a close secret, knowing that if on the morrow he should reveal it to his fellow-voyagers they would probably become dispirited, and might even refuse to join in the enterprise.

Half an hour before daybreak, although he had had scarcely any sleep, and did not know how long might elapse before he again would have a chance of a comfortable

night's rest, Jack was on the alert, and roused up all hands. The whole company took breakfast together, and Mr. Torkington, in spite of Captain Cruikshank's remonstrances, insisted upon serving out double rations in honour of the occasion. By the aid of trestles and rollers, the *Liberator* was then run down to the north shore of the reef, where, as the wind in these latitudes blows almost invariably from S.E., the surf was much less violent than on the south side.

As soon as all stores had been placed on board, and the little vessel was perfectly ready for sea, the captain, taking off his turbaned hat and kneeling on the sand, offered up a brief but earnest prayer for her safe return. Everybody followed his example. It was a strange yet affecting scene: the barren surface of the coral reef, totally devoid of vegetation, but glittering in the rays of the sun, whose dazzling white

orb had just risen out of the eastern waters (for within the tropics Sol is fierce and scorching from the moment he appears on the horizon); the deep blue expanse of the sea, scarcely ruffled by the gentle breeze that was blowing, yet lashed in some spots into angry white foam by the agency of hidden coral reefs; while on the strip of bright-yellow sand that bordered the shore knelt a motley company, whose sun-tanned faces and brilliant-coloured garments made them rather resemble a band of Bedouins performing their morning devotions, than a party of shipwrecked English seamen.

As soon as the captain had ended his prayer, to which every one responded with a fervent "Amen," Jack Wright and his crew sprang nimbly on board the *Liberator*. Jack took the tiller-ropes in his hand, while the others sat with their oars resting in the rowlocks. Those who were left on shore then

gave a hearty cheer, which was responded to with equal heartiness on board the boat ; “ Give way, lads ! ” said Jack ; all the oars dipped at once into the water, and away went the messenger to try and bring back deliverance to the captives. As soon as a tolerable offering had been obtained, sail was set.

While the boat was going free, and while they were protected by the reef from the violence of the surf, the sensation of being aboard was most exhilarating ; but as soon as they had circumnavigated the western coast of the coral island, and had begun to turn the boat’s head in a south-westerly direction, everything was changed for the worse. As the wind was blowing from S.S.E. the boat was as close-hauled as she could be, she pitched violently, and all on board, without exception, became as seasick as any boat-load of cockneys venturing out for a sail on a roughish day at Margate.

The sea-sickness, which for a time rendered them almost helpless, was probably produced by the sensitive state to which their stomachs had been reduced by long fasting. When they began to recover a little, Jack Wright served out to all hands a morsel of flour-cake and a tot of cherry brandy, a prescription which had a very beneficial effect. As they receded from the reef, the breeze freshened considerably, and soon all traces of their island habitation had disappeared. Towards mid-day, however, the wind fell light, so that just when the sun was at its hottest the crew were compelled to tug at the oars. It was not till now that they became sensible of their bodily weakness. "I feel," said one of the men, as he paused to pant and take breath, while the perspiration streamed down his face, "just as my old grannie would feel if you clapped an oar in her fist."

Seeing their evident distress, Jack

Wright ordered that four should pull and four should rest, taking turn and turn about. "We shall do better, boys," he said cheerfully, "after we've had our tea, and after the sun goes down." The meal which he called tea, consisted really of one morsel of pork and another of cheese, washed down by a tot of wine mixed with water. Nobody liked the look of the sunset. Sol disappeared an hour before his proper time into a high bank of hard-edged oily-looking black cloud. Presently a rushing sound was heard on the water, and then such a violent squall struck the boat, that if they had not let the sheets go, and put her before the wind, she would have capsized. Unfortunately, too, the squall was from the south-west, and as it lasted for a long time, the *Liberator* lost several of the miles which she had been making with such painful labour of the oars. Then the wind got round to the old quarter, S.E., and

blew more moderately, so that she was again put on her course.

Jack and his crew passed an anxious and comfortless night. The squall had raised up a heavy cross-sea, and the utmost attention was needed at the helm to keep the *Liberator's* head to the mountainous billows. The log was hove every half-hour, for as there was neither chart nor compass on board, it became most important to attend to the dead reckoning, in other words, to find out how many miles they had travelled. The waves perpetually broke over the boat, so that the unfortunate crew, whose clothing was of a very thin and flimsy character, were drenched through and through. No one had any rest, for those who were not occupied with the oars were engaged in baling out. Fortunately, the carpenter had done his work well, and though the *Liberator* shipped quantities of water, she made none through leakage. She was



as tight as a bottle, and danced over the big waves in a most vivacious style. Towards evening the wind again dropped, the sky became completely obscured, and torrents of rain fell. The rain did not add to the comfort of the crew, for sailors would sooner be ducked by salt water than fresh, but it smoothed down the angry sea.

At the approach of sunrise, the clouds, blushing a beautiful rose-pink, as if they were ashamed of themselves for weeping so much, hastened away and dispersed; the sun rose hot and glaring, and during the whole day there was a dead calm, accompanied by a heavy rolling swell, and intense heat. Every one was more or less sea-sick and exhausted.

At twelve o'clock, Jack Wright obtained an observation of the sun with the quadrant, found that the latitude agreed pretty nearly with the dead reckoning supplied by the log, and judged that in the

six-and-thirty hours which had elapsed since they left the Cargados Reef, they had run about 150 miles. Towards the evening the entire boat's crew, overcome by the excessive heat, and want of rest on the previous night, became so drowsy that they could scarcely keep themselves from falling asleep at their oars. But they were not long permitted to enjoy any relaxation. Once more the sun plunged into an angry bank of clouds, and a violent squall came sweeping over the sea, accompanied by thunder and lightning, and followed by torrents of rain. During the height of the thunder-storm, the whole sky was illuminated by electricity, forked lightning fell into the sea, and fire-balls burst alarmingly close to the boat. Fortunately, on this occasion, the wind blew from north-west, so that the *Liberator* flew with extreme swiftness towards her intended destination.

The following morning was cool, cloudy,

and fair, with a light wind from the regular quarter, S.E. This was the pleasantest weather the voyagers had yet experienced, and their small stock of strength and spirits, which had been nearly exhausted by the drenching rain and the scorching sun, began to be renewed. Matthew Baylis bore the hardships of the trip better than his more seasoned shipmates, partly perhaps because of his youth, but partly also on account of his temperance. Nearly all the others, during their stay on the coral reef, had dipped much more freely into the wine and beer casks than Captain Cruikshank suspected; although, perhaps, he winked at the consumption of wine and malt liquor, of which they had had a large supply, provided that the eatables and the water were kept under rigid supervision.

Towards the afternoon of this day Jack Wright grew very anxious, for during the gale of the previous night their log-ship

(that is, the piece of wood which is thrown out with a line attached to ascertain the speed at which the vessel is going) had broken adrift, carrying with it the greater part of the log-line, and he could no longer obtain the dead reckoning. The Mauritius is but a small island, and might easily be missed, and Jack feared that they had gone to leeward of it. The eyes of those who were not engaged with the oars were perpetually fixed on the south-western horizon, until at last, about four o'clock, one of the men declared that he saw the loom of land. Others asserted that it was merely a distant bank of clouds. He insisted that he was right, and offered to bet his next allowance of pineapple cheese that within an hour's time everybody else would agree with him.

Nobody would accept the bet, for even while he spoke the loom became more distinctly visible, and twenty minutes later

there could be no doubt about it. The wind had fallen very light, but this good news caused the rowers to bend their backs to their oars, "as if," as Jack observed, "they had been training on beefsteaks as well as porter." Before long, one of the hands, who knew the Mauritius, pronounced the land to be Round Island, and before sunset they were already in sight of Port Louis. Then they saw a full-rigged ship coming out of the harbour, a sight which caused them all to raise as hearty a cheer as they could muster. They hoisted their ensign—cunningly fabricated by Jemmy Ducks out of various-coloured cloths and muslins for the especial purpose of signalling—with the Union downwards, and fired their guns repeatedly; but the vessel took no notice of them, steadily pursuing her course. It seemed very cruel, but they were a mere speck on the sea, their ensign was only a few feet above the level of the water, and

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probably those on board the ship never saw them at all.

Jack felt more anxious than ever, for if another squall had sprung up, the *Liberator* would most probably have gone ashore on the rocks. But on this evening the sun set in a bed of gorgeous crimson and gold, and before the last remains of the ruddy radiance had yielded to the soft starlight of a tropical evening, the *Liberator* was slowly sailing into the harbour.

## CHAPTER IX.

## THE ORDER OF RELEASE.

THE coolies and negroes, and other labourers who were lounging about the quay, reposing after the toils of the day, and enjoying the balmy softness of the evening air, speedily gathered round the crew of the *Liberator*, marvelling at their savage appearance, their fantastic dresses, and their bodies scorched chesnut-brown by the sun. But when they learnt the perils which these men had undergone, and that they had just made a boat voyage of upwards of 250 miles, nothing could exceed the warmth of their hospitality. Fifty voices at once offered them bed and board, and such a jabbering and disputing arose as to who was to have the honour of entertaining these adventurous mariners, that from pure

excess of civility the said mariners ran some risk of spending the whole night on the quay-side without food or shelter. At length a burly negro settled the difficulty in a practical fashion by hoisting one of the weakest and most emaciated seamen on his back, and carrying him off to his hut, where he entertained him with every African delicacy.

As Jack Wright afterwards observed, "Before the merchants and bankers knew of our arrival, the barbarous people of the island had showed us no little kindness." For Jack himself there was no prospect of rest. As soon as he could extricate himself from the crowd of sight-seers, he begged the most intelligent bystander he could find to conduct him to the house of the Port Admiral.

The Port Admiral was fortunately at home, and Jack told his story in a manly, straightforward manner. On this occasion



nobody could complain of official delay. Within an hour after the *Liberator's* arrival in Port Louis, Her Majesty's sloop-of-war *Walrus*, commanded by Captain Holder-nesse, was unmooring ship. Then she rove all her running gear, bent her sails, and got her top-gallant and royal masts and yards up. Soon after daylight the next morning she was sailing out of the harbour, with Jack Wright and Matthew Baylis on board.

The others were left on shore to recruit. The Port Admiral, with some difficulty, released them from the hospitable hands of the negroes and coolies, who had stowed them away in their little huts; and as soon as the case became known next day, the merchants and others insisted on entertaining the castaways. The carpenter was taken possession of by a worthy French planter, named Lemer cier, and was entertained by him in such regal fashion, that

old Chips afterwards declared he had never since that time been able to tackle salt junk with a thorough relish. The Frenchman's good things had made him dainty. However, he rewarded his benefactor by making a model of a pleasure-boat, which turned out to be the lightest and swiftest craft of her kind in the island.

Jack Wright and Matthew were received with the utmost kindness by Captain Holdernessee and his ship's company. Every delicacy that the purser's stores afforded was offered to them, but they felt little appetite, and ate very sparingly. Their great desire was for sleep, and having at length got into their hammocks, they slept without once waking for more than seventeen hours. They then arose considerably refreshed, and made a tolerably substantial meal.

Let us now return to the inhabitants of the coral reef. When the malcontents of

Beer Island perceived the *Liberator* putting to sea they became terribly alarmed, fancying that the captain and all his loyal subjects had gone away and left them to their fate. Reconnoiterers were sent out, and on their bringing back word that the tent was still standing, the flag flying on the flagstaff, and the skipper pacing the sand with his hands behind his back, just as he used to pace the weather-side of the poop on board the *Cassiopeia*, then they felt somewhat comforted. But within a day or two afterwards a violent quarrel broke out among them, in which knives were drawn and blood nearly spilt. They then separated into two factions, the larger of which, headed by Rawlins, the ex-mate, were in favour of returning to their allegiance. The others vowed that they would still stand out, and entertained a wild scheme of building a small vessel out of the timber of the wreck, and of sailing about

as free and independent rovers among the islands of the Indian Ocean. The mutineers had been much more successful in fishing than the loyalists, and had latterly discovered a tract of coast where the turtles came ashore to deposit their eggs. Rawlins and another man, one of the soberest of the mutineers' party, were accordingly sent as a deputation to confer with Captain Cruikshank, bearing 'presents in their hands. The crafty old skipper received them graciously, accepted the turtles' eggs with eagerness, but refused to make any promises.

"I can only say to ye now," said he, "what I have said before: I must have entire and uncondeditional surrender."

A conference took place among the Rawlinsians upon their return to Beer Island, the result of which was that before long they removed all their stores to Cassiopeia Reef, and re-enlisted under the

loyal banner. The five malcontents who still stood out loudly jeered at them on their departure, but their hearts began to sink within them when they perceived how few their own numbers were, and they feared that their buccaneering cutter, which they had built so beautifully (in the air) when spinning yarns around the camp-fire, would never be built in reality. As for Rawlins and his men, like all half-and-half politicians, they had to undergo a double persecution. They were reviled by the ultra-rebels whom they had deserted, and they were greeted with a round of derisive and ironical cheers by the loyalists. Captain Cruikshank at once put a stop to these demonstrations, told the newcomers where to pitch their camp, and as soon as convenient set them to work.

Mr. O'Halloran, the surgeon, who was utterly weary of inaction, and longed for excitement, volunteered to bring the five

remaining rebels into camp by force of arms, dead or alive; and Rawlins, anxious to get back into favour, eagerly seconded the request. Captain Cruikshank replied thus—

“I’m unwilling to be at the trouble of climbing a tree when the fruit’s ready to drop into my mouth. Leave them alone and they’ll come home, just as Mr. Bopeep”—here he pointed to Rawlins—“and his sheep have done. Besides, as for bringing them in dead or alive, it’s a ticklish matter for a merchant-captain to be found guilty of shooting his crew. I might chance to find myself on a platform with a trap-door in it, and a nightcap over my neb; and I don’t want to be troubled with prisoners, for I can’t spare men to guard them, and the only one we’ve had has run away; the result therefore of my cogitations is, doctor, that your proposition is highly inappropriate and mischeevous. ‘*Quod erat demonstrandum,*’ as Euclid says.”

A Bible had been found in a chest which had been washed ashore belonging to Mr. Watts, and as the next day was Sunday, Mr. Torkington, who was a member of the Church of England, begged the captain during the service to read the 107th Psalm, "which," said the chief steward, "is one of the Psalms appointed by our Church to be read this day, and is, moreover, well suited to our present condition." Captain Cruikshank agreed, and was in the act of reading the thirtieth verse,—"*Then are they glad because they be quiet, so he bringeth them unto their desired haven,*"—when one of the congregation began shouting, "A sail! a sail!" and ran capering down to the beach like a madman.

It was the *Walrus*. She was approaching the reef from the north side, Jack Wright having warned Captain Holdernessee of the violence of the surf which broke on the south and south-east coasts. Presently

she dropped her anchor, and proceeded to lower several of her boats. It is unnecessary to describe the joyful excitement which prevailed among the loyal inhabitants of the reef. They all set to work gathering together their stores, and the valuable property which had been recovered from the wreck.

The five men who still lingered on Beer Island were in a state of terrible alarm as soon as they spied Her Majesty's broad pendant. Visions of drum-head courts-martial, followed by cats-o'-nine-tails, filled their brains, bemused with short commons and excessive drinking. But when they saw a party of marines with arms in their hands, stepping ashore, they lost heart altogether, and, precipitately deserting their camp, ran as fast as their legs would carry them towards the loyalist settlement, coming in one by one, and hoping to avoid observation by mingling



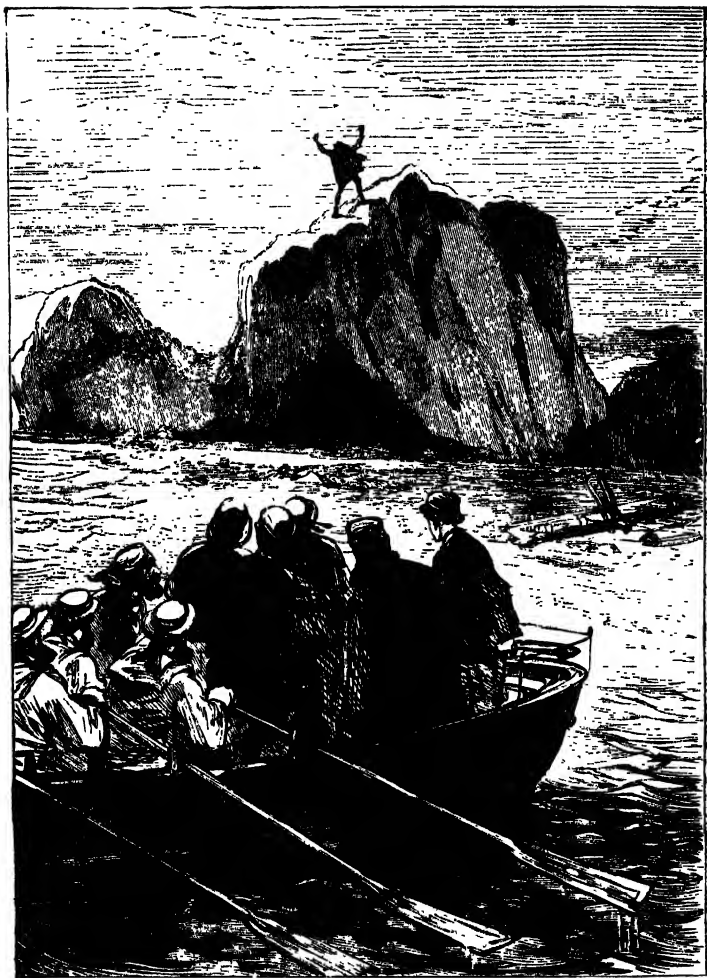
with the crowd. Most of the people were too busily occupied to pay any attention to them, but their arrival did not escape Captain Cruikshank's keen eyes. He called them aside, and addressed them in these words—

“Ye maun deliver up all the stolen property into which ye have fixed your unhallowed talons, and ye maun return to your duty. Upon these conditions, I shall say nothing consairning your mutinous behaviour. After a victory, one can afford to be mairciful.”

A good many of the sailors, both loyalists and mutineers, had concealed valuable property, such as watches, rings, bracelets, and other articles of jewellery, about their persons; but they were strictly overhauled by the officer in command of the marines, and compelled to disgorge

Some of the cloth, muslin, and linen, however, was afterwards served out to them,





THE LAST MAN ON THE ISLAND.

to make up for the kits which they had lost, in proportion to their behaviour during their stay upon the reef. Boat-load after boat-load of stores and passengers were then conveyed safely on board the *Walrus*.

Captain Cruikshank had been the last man to leave the wreck, and he was also, as he believed, the last man to leave the scene of his temporary imprisonment. He had stepped on board the boat, and the midshipman in charge had just ordered the crew to "give way," when one of them exclaimed, touching his hat as he spoke—

"There is some one still on the island, sir."

Every one, on hearing these words, looked towards the shore, where they perceived a strange figure standing on the summit of a rock, shouting and gesticulating. The figure was so lean, and emaciated, and sun-scorched, that it looked like a bronze skeleton. It was perfectly naked,

except that it wore a flannel shirt which was drawn completely over the head so that the face was invisible. Some of the sailors landed, and approached the figure. It ran away as they drew near, but after a smart chase it sank down exhausted, was captured and carried on board the boat. It proved of course to be Ellison, the escaped prisoner, who had been suspected of mutilating the body of Mr. Watts. After being a short time on board the *Walrus*, under the care of the surgeon, Ellison in some measure recovered his bodily powers, but his mind was entirely gone. Excessive drinking, followed by entire abstinence from all liquors, hunger and thirst, aided possibly also by mental remorse, had completely deprived him of his senses. Little could be obtained from his wandering and incoherent answers, except that he had subsisted on raw shell-fish, and that he believed himself to be the ghost of Watts,

wandering about the earth without a head. The surgeon of the *Walrus*, a kind-hearted man, of a very different stamp to the coarse and tyrannical O'Halloran, bestowed every care on the unfortunate wretch, but he died in the hospital at Port Louis a few days after arrival there.

All the others, though dissipation and privation combined had made several of them very ill, gradually recovered, and they soon began to disperse in various directions. Captain Cruikshank remained at Port Louis, for the purpose of assisting, in concert with Lloyd's agent, in recovering as much of the cargo as possible from the wreck of the *Cassiopeia*; Mr. Torkington also stayed with him; Tyrrell and O'Halloran went on to Calcutta, the latter to fulfil his engagement there, the former from a spirit of adventure; while Jack Wright got a berth as second mate on board a sugar ship which was loading for

Australia. He refused, however, to bind himself to the vessel for more than the passage, alleging that he preferred returning to England, in order to enter again into Messrs Tyrrell's service. The captain of the *Jessamine*, as the barque was called, was not over well supplied with hands, and he was glad to allow Dick and Matthew to work their passage on the same conditions.

Dick had been much sobered by the discipline which he had undergone on board the *Cassiopeia*, and still more by all the occurrences of the shipwreck, and before leaving Port Louis he wrote a penitent letter to his mother at Finkley, telling her that he meant to return home with an apronful of gold for her, and begging her to address all letters to the Post Office at Melbourne. Matthew also wrote to his friends, though he felt so ashamed at his conduct, he could scarcely put pen to paper.

## CHAPTER X.

## AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

THE *Fessamine* arrived safely at Melbourne, and then Jack Wright and his youthful companions went up the country, and spent a twelvemonth on the gold-diggings. They did not obtain much gold, but they met with numerous adventures. The account of these adventures would fill a big book, so we must content ourselves by relating one of them only.

The three gold-seekers were travelling towards Melbourne, and had entered the forest which clothes the slopes of the great dividing range of mountains. The day had been excessively sultry, and Dick and Matthew were very glad when Jack Wright gave the signal to halt for the night. Presently Jack said, gazing up at the sky with



a weather-wise face, "We shall have a storm to-night, but it won't come down for an hour. While you two get tea ready, I'll go on a surveying cruise, and see if I can't find a settler's hut. We may as well pass the night, if we can, under the shelter of a roof."

With these words he strolled away, carrying his gun in his hand. Before he had gone a quarter of a mile, a wallaby (a small species of kangaroo) sprang out of a wattle-bush. Jack immediately gave chase, but the undergrowth was so thick that he had no chance of a fair shot. He steadily pursued the wallaby, however, up the slope of a hill, but lost sight of it before he reached the summit.

"Lucky for you, Master Wallaby," said Jack, goodhumouredly, as he stopped to take breath; "but not so lucky for me and my mates. Hollo! what's that? Smoke, I declare!"

- "I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled  
Above the tall elms that a cottage was near ;  
And I said, ' If there's peace to be found in the world,  
A heart that is humble may look for it here. "

Light-hearted Jack merrily carolled forth the old song of the " Woodpecker," and then began to descend the hill. The scrub was so thick that he could scarcely see three yards before him, and he was surprised to find a little river at the bottom. Tree-ferns and other moisture-loving plants grew to the very edge of the water, so that not an inch of bare soil was visible.

On the opposite side of the river Jack spied a tall, hale old man seated on a log, with a pipe in his mouth, and busily engaged in fishing. By his side, on a sheet of bark, lay some half-score of fish. Jack was just hesitating whether he should hail him, when his attention was arrested by an extraordinary spectacle. He perceived a slight movement in the foliage behind the

fisherman's back, as if a breeze had stirred the leaves, and then a large black snake crept out, coiled himself comfortably on the sheet of bark, and began to make a hearty meal from the fish that lay quivering there.

Just then, a low muttering of thunder caused the old gentleman, who had hitherto been absorbed in his pastime, first to look up and then to look round. As soon as he saw the reptile, he made such a grimace and uttered such a yell, that Jack burst into a roar of laughter. The snake stood up on end and showed fight, whereupon the old fisherman flung himself headlong into the water, and lay there floundering like a porpoise. Jack now sang out loudly, pushed his way through the bushes, lowered the stock of his gun, and hauled the fisherman out, not much the worse for his fright and ducking. Jack was amused to perceive that he had kept his pipe firmly between his teeth all the time he was in the water.

"Thank ye, lad, thank ye," said the old fellow, shaking himself like a Newfoundland dog. "Eh, mon!" he continued, pointing to the other side of the river, "did ye see him? Fourteen foot long, if he was an inch."

"Avast there!" cried Jack, laughing. "He was but five, and that's long enough, in all conscience."

"And now, lad," continued the old man, as he dried his pipe on his sleeve, "have ye got such a thing as a bit of 'bacca about ye? I'm clean run out."

"Here you are," answered the sailor, producing a fig of Barratt's best twist.

"That's the jockey for me," exclaimed the old fellow, as he cut off a goodly portion. "It minds me of some 'bacca I once got off a ship's steward."

The two men then entered into a friendly conversation. "A storm was approaching," Jack observed. "Could his

new friend give him and his mates shelter for the night?"

"My master can," replied the old man. "I'll rin home and tell 'em ye're comin'. Ye canna miss the road, there's a tree felled across the creek by way of a bridge a hundred yards below this, and if ye follow yer nose when ye're on the tree ye're tied to come\* right upon our hut."

Jack hurried back to his comrades as fast as he could, for the lightning was flashing and large raindrops were pattering down. They laughed heartily over the story of the fisherman and the snake, packed up their blankets, and made their way to the river. They soon found the bridge, which was formed of a single gigantic tree, with the upper surface flattened by the adze; so that sheep and cattle could safely pass over it. From the

\* *Tied to come*, that is, you cannot help coming. A North of England idiom.

bridge a regular track led up to the settler's hut. Presently the eyes of the travellers were gladdened by the sight of a piece of tilled land, sown with oats. Farther on there was a large patch of potatoes, then a field of wheat, then a kitchen garden in which some English fruit-trees had been planted, and then appeared the hut. It was built of unpainted weatherboards, but its windows were provided with sashes, and it possessed a brick chimney. Near the door stood a grindstone, over which an elderly man was stooping, turning the grindstone with his foot by means of a treadle, and sharpening an adze. And at the back entrance (for the so-called hut was grand enough to have two outlets) appeared a neatly-dressed woman, surrounded by half-a-dozen she-goats, rubbing their heads affectionately against her apron, and each clamorously demanding to be milked first. Jack's acquaintance, the hero of the snake adven-

ture, appeared in the background, putting a new lash, made from the fragment of a black silk neckerchief, on to his bullock-whip.

As the travellers drew near to the hut, the man at the grindstone looked up, still continuing to work at the treadle. His face, though healthy and weatherbeaten, bore a sorrowful expression, as of a man who had gone through many troubles.

"Good evening, mates!" he said, in a somewhat abrupt, but not inhospitable manner; "I hear you've pulled my partner out of the water. Come inside, we can find you supper and beds."

As he spoke, a vivid flash of lightning darted across the ink-black sky, followed by a rattling peal of thunder.

"Come inside," repeated the settler, "unless you want to be soaked to the skin."

Accordingly they all hurried into the

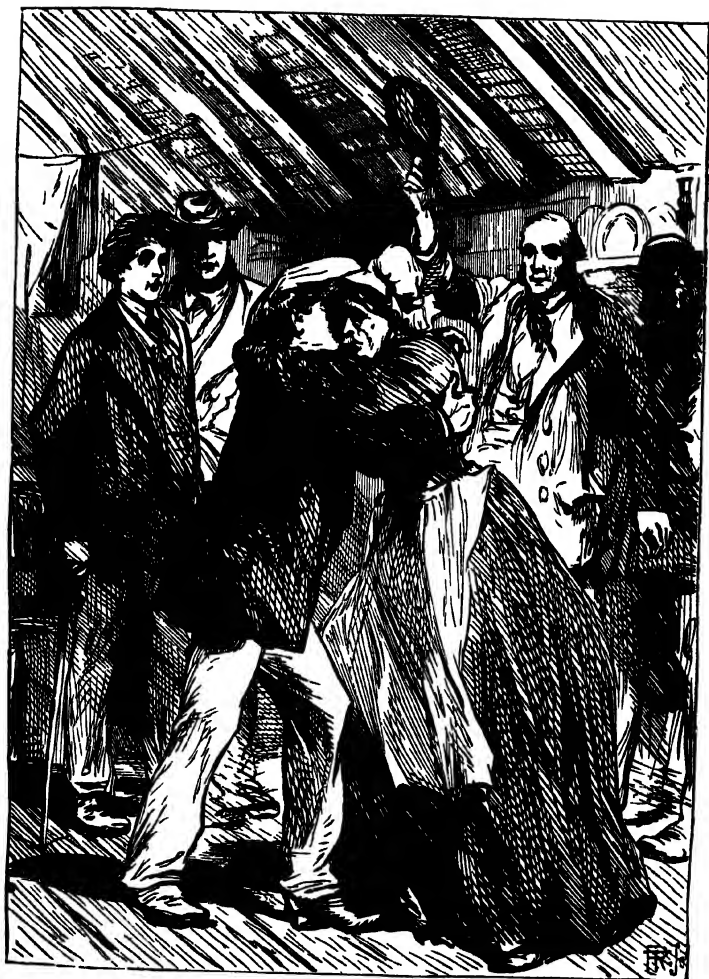
kitchen, or principal apartment of the hut, where a blazing fire of logs was burning on the hearth, and where already the mistress of the house, the old fisherman, a dog, two cats, a tame kangaroo, and all the goats were amicably crowded together.

Until he had crossed the threshold, Matthew Baylis, wearied by a long day's journey on foot, and with his broad-brimmed hat slouched over his eyes, had not once cast a glance at the proprietor of the hut. But his voice had stirred him strangely. It seemed to bring before his mind a more vivid picture of his home in England than he had seen for many a day. He knew by the man's peculiar accent that he came from the same part of the country as himself, and he determined to take an opportunity of asking him, during the course of the evening, how long he had been in Australia, and whether he could give him any tidings concerning the Baylis



family. But just then the woman raised her head—she had been stooping to milk one of the goats—and caught sight of Matthew's side-face, which was fully illuminated at that instant by the bright blaze of the fire. She held up her hands, uttered a loud inarticulate cry, then murmured, "My boy, my darling Mat!" and threw herself on his neck and kissed him. Her husband stood for a moment like one astonished, then stared Dick full in the face, shook his hand as if in a dream, then roused himself, and exclaimed in a loud voice, "Welcome home, son Matthew!"

As for Willie Pershore, he flung his hat up to the roof, caught it again, leapt, as he afterwards phrased it, like a three-year-old, and then said, "Bless us and save us! to think that we should come to the very ends of the earth, and meet the boy here!"



WELCOME HOME, SON MATTHEW!!



## CHAPTER XI.

## RE-UNION.

WE shall leave our readers to imagine for themselves the joyfulness of the meeting between the bereaved parents and their long-lost boy, as well as the astonishment of honest Jack Wright, who suddenly found himself among people who insisted on treating him as if they had known him from infancy. Let us rather expend a portion of the space that still remains to us in relating as briefly and clearly as possible all that had happened since Matthew and Dick Rigdon ran away from home.

The blow on the head which Mrs. Baylis had received from the lock of the exploded pistol was not in itself serious, and she would soon have recovered, but for the ill news which followed it. When she

awoke to consciousness she found that her husband was a ruined man, for the destruction of his haystacks had added a crushing burden to the weight of debt and difficulty with which he was already embarrassed. A severe and long-continued low fever had succeeded the accident, and nearly brought her to the grave.

It had been at once proved that Matthew and his mischief-loving friend were entirely innocent of the fatal conflagration. Two wandering vagabonds, fast asleep, and bemused with liquor, were found lying beneath one of the burning ricks, with the contents of a box of lucifer matches scattered by their sides. They had narrowly escaped being burnt to death. They were afterwards tried for the crime of arson, but were acquitted, as it appeared tolerably evident that they had fired the ricks from gross carelessness, and not from malice.

From that moment John Baylis could scarcely bear to speak to his eldest son, while he openly quarrelled with his daughter-in-law, whom he charged with having, by means of her false and slanderous tongue, driven forth his youngest boy to wander like a beggar over the face of the country. No trace could be found of the missing "lads. Nobody in Croxhaven had seen them go on board the *Cassiopeia*, and Mr. Rigdon, on his return after her narrow escape from the Dunster Shoal, stated that they were certainly not on board that vessel. It will be remembered that he was incapacitated by an accident from active duty, after the boys emerged from their hiding-place, and was obliged to issue his orders from a hammock. So, although a diligent search was made, it was made in wrong directions, and was, of course, entirely fruitless.

What with the ruinous effects of the fire and the loss of his youngest boy, Mr.

Baylis seemed in danger of losing his wits altogether. Sir Henry Tothill, the squire, a sharp man of business, but by no means incapable of kindness, now came to the rescue. He pointed out to young John Baylis that his father's affairs were in a hopeless state of insolvency, and then made him the following proposal:—He offered to purchase the fee-simple of Snape Farm; to satisfy the claims of Mr. Baylis' creditors; to send the farmer, his wife, and his favourite old labourer, Willie Pershore, to Melbourne, free of expense, besides providing them with sufficient capital to begin the world anew there; and, finally, to take John Baylis the younger as his yearly tenant.

All the neighbours praised Sir Henry's unexampled generosity, but he was a long-headed fellow, and though he might have exacted much harsher terms, he had not made a bad bargain for himself. For years

past he had cast a longing eye on the ancestral acres of the Baylises, which he felt sure could be made to yield twice their present produce if farmed on modern principles, and he was now enabled at one stroke to do an act of kindness and to carry out a long-planned policy. Young John was an enthusiastic farmer and improver, and, though he did not venture to say so openly, in his heart he preferred to be the tenant of an energetic landlord, rather than the assistant of an old-fashioned prejudiced parent.

The long voyage did the elder Baylises a world of good, they completely recovered their bodily health, and if they could have obtained any tidings of their boy, they would also have regained their spirits. They prudently avoided the temptations of mining adventure, and soon after landing, by the aid of the funds supplied by Sir Henry, and under the liberal provisions of



the new Victorian Land Act, they settled on the block of land where Matthew had so opportunely discovered them. Some of Mr. Baylis's neighbours at Snape Farm had advised him to let Willie Pershore stay at home, prophesying that he would find the self-willed old fellow a terrible encumbrance in the colony. But the farmer was not inclined to part with Willie, whom he had known from boyhood, and it would have broken poor old Willie's heart to be left behind. He had no one else to care for, having buried his wife and children many years before; he was not over fond of Master John, and had still less liking for Master John's wife. As soon as he arrived in Australia, old Willie discomfited the croakers and all their prophecies, by setting to work with an energy that astonished everybody. He felled trees, and erected fences, and grubbed up roots—which was all strange work to him—with

the spirit of a young man of five-and-twenty.

His example put new life into the broken-spirited farmer, for his pride would not allow him to be outdone by old Willie. He made Willie his partner, but Willie still persisted in speaking of him as "the master," though he allowed his tongue to run as freely as he had ever done in England. Mrs. Baylis devoted herself to the dairy department; within a year she had a flourishing family of goats, while the miners at the nearest gold-field—five miles distant—were always eager to buy her poultry and eggs. Thus at the time of Matthew's appearance, Snape Farm—they still kept up the old name—was becoming a flourishing little settlement.

Whatever hankerings Matthew might have after a more enterprising life, either as a sailor or as a gold-digger, he knew that his proper place was with his father and

mother. It would have been the height of ingratitude to desert them now. So Matthew stayed at the new Australian home, and presently astonished Willie by his mechanical skill. Willie began to think something of him when he fitted an axe with a new handle; he thought still better of him when Matthew repaired the bullock-dray, which Willie had declared to be a job that no one but a wheelwright could manage; but when Matthew, aided by Jack Wright and Dick Rigdon, constructed a water-wheel which actually ground corn into flour, Willie vowed that he was too clever for a farmer, and that he'd better go back to England and make steam-coaches, as Geordie Stephenson used to do.

A pair of such visitors as Jack Wright and Dick Rigdon were very unlike a pair of idle visitors at an English country mansion, who do nothing but consume the fruits of

the earth and destroy the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. Farmer Baylis would have been very loth to give bed and board for six months to a couple of gentlemen of this stamp. But Jack and Dick gave the farmer what Captain Cruikshank would have called "a fair equevalent" in return for their board and lodging. They worked like dragons, cutting down trees, splitting posts and rails, putting up fences, to say nothing of a new hen-house for Mrs. Baylis—warranted thief-proof. The worst poultry-thieves in Victoria are the native cats, sharp-nosed spotted creatures, which are not cats at all, but a species of stoat or weasel. But the job of which Jack was most proud was his grubbing of the Long Croft, as Willie, tenacious of home-memories, loved to call it.

"When I came here," observed Jack, "that field, with all those ugly black stumps in it, reminded me of my grand-

mother's mouth before she went to the dentist's; whereas now," says Jack, triumphantly, "it reminds me of my grandfather's chin after he had been to the barber's."

"Well, Mrs. Baylis," said Jack, one evening, as the whole company sat enjoying the balmy air on a rustic bench of Matthew's construction, while some of the quadruped inhabitants of the farm, namely, the cats, the dogs, the goats, and Grasshopper, the tame kangaroo, stood or sat in friendly intercourse at their feet,—“Well, Mrs. Baylis, I must think about bidding good-bye to Snape Farm in a day or two.”

“We shall be very sorry—aye, very sorry indeed, to lose you,” replied Mrs. Baylis.

“And I shall be sorry to go,” said Jack, “leaving such good friends behind me. But it must be. I’ve been eighteen months ashore, and I’m getting to long for the

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smell of the salt water and the touch of the tarry ropes. I'm something like the merman I once read about in a story-book. Some fishermen caught a merman in their nets, and took him as a present to the king. The king was delighted, and finding that the merman was a clever fellow, he made him his private secretary. Years passed away, and the merman never touched water in anything bigger than a wash-handbasin, when war broke out, and the king led his army to invade the territories of another king. Of course he took his secretary with him. To get there they had to cross a narrow arm of the sea. The secretary became very much agitated as soon as he smelt the salt water, and just as they were going to land he sung out, 'Good-bye, your majesty!' stripped off his long-shore togs, jumped overboard, dived, and was never seen again. Now," said Jack, "I'm like that merman."

"But you haven't smelt the sea lately, Jack," observed Matthew.

"No, but I've had a letter from an old salt, which comes to much the same thing; and with the permission of the company, I'll read it aloud."

*Greenock, N.B., January, 186—*

MY DEAR FRIEND,—Cordially do I allot to ye this title, remembering the services rendered by ye during our perilous sojourn on the Cargados Reef; services which I have submitted in detail to my esteemed owners, Messrs. Tyrrell, and of which they are prepared to afford you substantial acknowledgment. But, my friend, I cannot applaud your wisdom in quitting an honourable profession to run after gold-mining, which is at best but a gambling business; more reputable, I grant, than dice-throwing or card-playing, because it involves bodily labour, but no less risky and uncertain. Had ye received the benefits of a classical education, ye might have remembered the words of the poet, "*Effodiuntur opes, irritamenta malorum:*" which is, being interpreted, "Money, an incitement to evil, is dug out of the bowels of the earth;" and surely we cannot forget the words of another book, which tells us that riches make to themselves wings and flee away. Of which wise saying I have just had painful proof, having been ass enough to trust three hundred hard-earned sovereigns to the custody of a Deposit Bank. But I did not assume the pen to speak of my own troubles—the heart knoweth its own bitterness—I write rather to bid ye return with all speed to England. During your homeward passage strive to make yourself a skilful navigator; let

your mornings and evenings be devoted to the works of Horsburgh and Norie; and then, on arrival, present yourself before Messrs. Tyrrell.

Faithfully yours,

ALEXANDER CRUIKSHANK.

P.S.—My worthy old steward, Torkington, has quitted the sea and set up an eating-house in Liverpool. Rawlins has gone on a voyage to China, *before the mast*. Profit by his ill example.

To Mr. John Wright, late of the *Cassiopeia*,  
Post-office, Melbourne.

“And now, Dick,” said Jack Wright, turning to young Rigdon, “tell me what you mean to do.”

“I can scarcely make up my mind,” said Dick, with a puzzled face; “I daren’t go home to Finkley. My mother isn’t like your mother, Mat; and as for uncle Ben, he is quite capable of applying the horsewhip to my back, even at this distance of time.”

“Stay here,” pleaded Matthew, “and help us with the autumn ploughing.”

“Come with me,” said Jack Wright, smiling, “and let me make a thorough sailor of you. Youv’e got the makings of



one already; but one or two voyages are not enough to complete a seaman."

"I feel in a complete fix," cried Dick; "I like the farm work, and I like the ship work; I like you, Mat, and I like you, Jack: Come, Willie, you decide for me. Which shall I do, stay here, or go to sea?"

"Which, laddie?" said old Willie, slyly, as he blew a deliberative whiff from his pipe; "why, go to sea, of course; because then ye'll sometimes bring me a pound of rale Virginia tobaccy, like that they had aboard the *Catch-ye-up-here!*"

THE FND.

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